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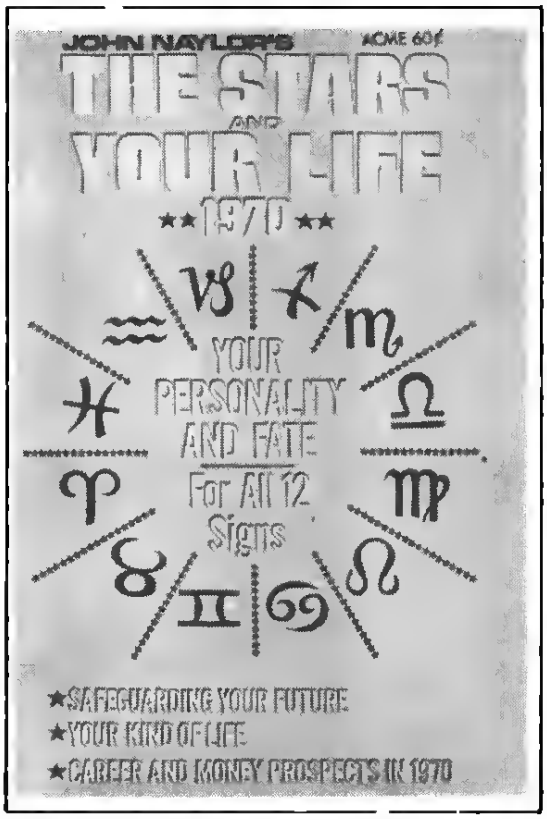
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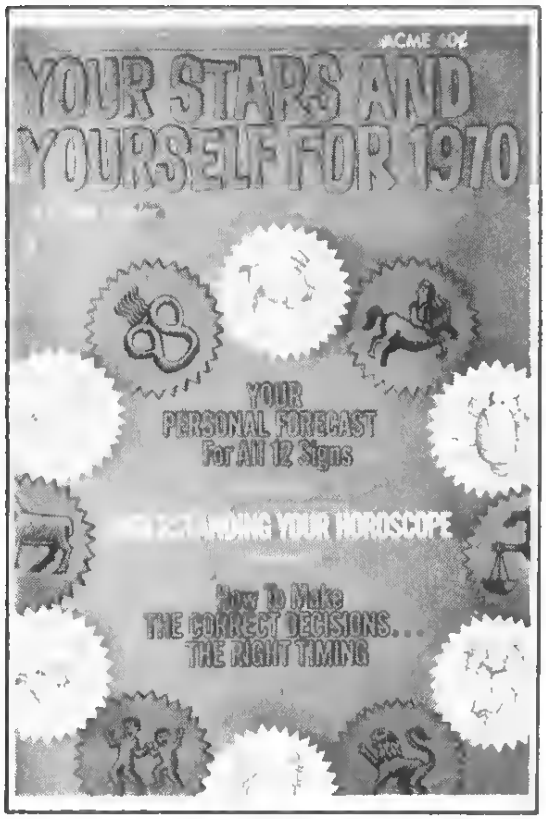
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MAGAZINE OF

HORROR

THE BIZARRE, THE FRIGHTENING, THE GRUESOME

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Robert A. W. Lowndes, *Editor*

MAGAZINE OF HORROR, Vol. 6, No. 2, May 1970 (whole number 32). Published bi-monthly by Health Knowledge, Inc. Executive and editorial offices at 140 Fifth Avenue, N.Y., N.Y. 10011. Single copy 60c. Annual subscription (6 issues) $3.00 in the U.S., Canada, and Pan American Union. Foreign, $3.50. Manuscripts accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes will be carefully considered, but the publisher and editors will not be responsible for loss or damage. All payments for accepted contributions are made on publication. Copyright c 1970 by Health Knowledge, Inc. All rights reserved under Universal International and Pan American copyright conventions. Printed in U.S.A.

The Editor's Page

Once upon a time, just about the best deal an author could hope for, in respect to getting his latest novel widely discussed and sought after, regardless of any merit otherwise, was to have it banned in Boston. At first, this was something that just happened naturally; but before that era was over, such matters were carefully arranged for in advance, so that "banned in Boston" became as phony as a spontaneous demonstration. (These days, spontaneous demonstrations are delayed if the TV cameras have not arrived on time; no show until the whole world's watching.)

Norman Spinrad's novel, *Bug Jack Barron*, was not planned along such lines. It was virtually commissioned by the editor who had accepted an earlier novel, and then rejected. This sort of thing happens. Both parties felt wronged, and neither without justice, as the editor did not receive the novel he believed he would be getting and the author had every right to believe that he was delivering what was wanted—not in the sense of slanting it toward the editor, but in the subtler (and often, as this case shows, delusive) sense of believing that the editor would be delighted by what the author did. Spinrad had certainly been given grounds for believing that the way he wanted to do this novel had, in effect, been accepted in advance. So it wasn't a case of either party double-crossing the other, but honest misunderstanding on both sides.

The mss. was then rejected by other editors in this country to whom it was sent, and it was not until it appeared as a serial in *NEW WORLDS* (the British experimental fantasy-science fiction publication), and one issue containing the serial was suppressed on the grounds of "obscenity", that American publishers began to take notice. I do not know whether any which had previously rejected the story changed their minds; I do know that doors began to open which had been tightly locked before.

In a way, this is unfortunate, in two respects: (a) the focus has been shifted from what the book really is, what it really says, to a political-moral-social "issue", which means that it has and will continue to be both lauded and condemned for all the wrong reasons (b) the author was encouraged to insist that the novel be published exactly as written in the manuscript—very possibly feeling that any changes desired would be attempts to water it down. Under more normal circumstances of publication, and with a competent, conscientious and sympathetic editor, it is at least possible that Spinrad would have consented to some suggestions for improvement that did not compromise what he was trying to do, but would indeed improve the final product.

The book was finally published by Avon in soft covers, and there is also a hard cover edition. I would suggest that anyone interested, after reading this discussion, try the soft-cover edition first. If you feel, as I do, that it has solid worth, despite faults, then you may want to obtain the hard-cover edition, published by Walker. The extra 95c you'll be spending in that instance is far less painful than $5 lost should you buy

the Walker edition and find the book unreadable, or not worth it to *your* taste.

I stress the "unreadable" possibility, simply because some persons whom I know to have been interested in the argument of the story have reported that they just couldn't read it—and not because of content. Others, of course, have turned themselves off at the content itself. There are three hurdles to get over in reading it, and whether someone else thinks that you should not be bothered by them is irrelevant; they are there, and an honest discussion of the book must make this clear from the start.

Hurdle 1: *style:* Spinrad's intent here is twofold: (a) to promote reading as fast as the fast pace of the story (b) to produce direct and immediate emotional effect and involvement with the feelings of the characters, their thought patterns, so that the reader will see not only their innards but also see what they see out of their eyes in their own individual terms. Of the two intentions, the second is successful (though not always to the same degree) but the more successful (b) is, the more it interferes with object (a). If you try to read the story at a fast pace, then the style appears to be almost totally inept—as if, as one reader commented, the author does not know which of a dozen possible words he wants, so strings them all together in hopes that one will be the right one. You have to read slowly (and actually, the absence of punctuation is going to force this anyway) in order to absorb the over-all effect that the author wants. When you do that, there's a good chance that you will find this as viscerally moving at nearly all times as I did.

Hurdle 2: *scatology:* For the reader who is not accustomed to reading or hearing sentences saturated with four-letter words relating to the toilet (there's more bathroom than bedroom "obscenity") this hurdle can be formidable. No one who has lived in barracks for any length of time should be greatly bothered. No one who has read the works of de Sade (particularly *The 120 Days of Sodom*) should be greatly bothered. And I am told that there are innumerable contemporary mainstream novels which are as useful in accustoming the reader to such diction as the fiction by the Marquis. However, this element is no more arbitrary than the style—that is, it was not something actually superfluous, inserted merely to shock the shockable reader, although in a more important sense, *Bug Jack Barron* is, indeed, intended to shock.

Hurdle 3: *explicit sex scenes:* I am told by Lester del Rey, that these are mild by comparision to numerous mainstream novels, such as *The Carpetbaggers;* but they will nonetheless present a hurdle to the reader who is not used to explicit sex scenes. As with the scatology, these are neither superfluous nor inserted for the purpose of titillation; while they are the sort of explicit description which you will find in "hard-core pornography", the intent is not pornographic.

As a matter of fact, the reader who picks up the book, looking for hard-core pornography is going to be disappointed. The sex scenes are realistic, but within the frame of general human limitations (genuine pornography discards this entirely with its endless orgies); and these, for all the limitations of the persons involved are acts of love on Barron's part. That is, it is love he seeks to express, the love he feels for his ex-wife; and because she cannot be had, he seeks out girls who remind him of her. There is no sadism, no masochism in the scenes, nor again even so much as a hint of homosexuality or of highly unsavory deviations or perversions. The scenes are there not because the author

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Now On Sale – or See Page 125

is getting a kick out of describing sexual acts but because we cannot understand Jack Barron without these intimate glimpses.

That is, we cannot understand him emotionally, cannot know him. The older way of presenting such a character, with hints and implications and descriptions up to the act, could, of course give needed intellectual information–but that is all that it would be. Here the reader is involved directly.

I can almost hear some readers asking, "Then you think this is a good way to write a story?" As if there were such a thing as one and only one "good way" to write any and all stories! I shall merely state that the tree is known by its fruit, and that the way Norman Spinrad chose to write this particular story was indeed not only "a good way" but the only way for him to write the story he wanted to write – and that it would not necessarily have been right for anyone else; or, for that matter, may not be right for some other story Spinrad wants to write later. Not if he wants to be an author, rather than a hack.

All three elements, then, are a necessary part of achieving the author's often-stated purpose of writing about an imaginary society in such a way that the reader can feel he is really there in it. It is a case of unadulterated presentation, telling it as it is, with no cushion between the author and the reader. No one explains to someone else what is going on for the sake of the reader, nor are there any other of the worn literary devices employed to fill in the background for the reader. In actual life, there are times when it is natural and normal for any of us to tell someone else what something is about; there are times when we talk to someone else about the past–either the general, historical past, our own individual past, or a past shared with the person or persons present. All the special information, aside from

presentation of what someone sees, hears, touches, smells, feels, that the reader will need in order to participate in what is happening comes through such entirely natural means, and I do not recall any instance in the book where a situation seemed to have been contrived solely for the purpose of presenting background information to the reader.

This novel was written as science fiction, and is sold as science fiction; however, the reason why I am discussing it is that, on the contrary, I consider it one of the outstanding horror stories of the decade. It isn't the weird sort of horror; it's the historical sort of horror–such as you find in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, or in novels dealing realistically with life in Nazi or Soviet states. It is bizarre, gruesome, and frightening–an "if this goes on" story, depicting an all-too plausible near-future; the technological advances are very slight, all dealing with things which we have surely heard about if we have followed the papers, etc., but some of which are not present yet.

In his Guest-of-Honor speech at the 1968 Lunacon, Donald A. Wollheim discussed *Bug Jack Barron*, noting that there wasn't a nice thing that he could say about it. I agree with this–but Don and I part rather soon, because the burden of his discussion implied that one *should* be able to say something nice about any story worth reading at all. I couldn't disagree more, so far as anything in the nature of universal standards of worth in literature goes. (As an individual standard–which means one on which a sizeable number of individuals may well agree–I have no quarrel with the proposition: this is a matter of taste, and while discussions of taste may result in enlightenment, arguments about it are not going to prove anything to anyone.) I cannot say

(Turn To Page 120)

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Now on sale – or see Page 125

THE HUNTERS FROM BEYOND

By Clark Ashton Smith

(Author of *The Colossus Of Ylourgne, The Monster of the Prophecy,* etc.)

CLARK ASHTON SMITH (1893-1961) wrote at least three stories in which Philip Hastane, artist, is the narrator. The first to be published was *The City of Singing Flame,* which was the cover story for the July 1931 issue of *WONDER STORIES;* the November issue ran the sequel, *Beyond the Singing Flame.* The 1942 collection of Smith's stories (first of a series not yet finished) from Arkham House, *Out of Space and Time,* ran the two stories together under the title of *The City of the Singing Flame.* We reprinted the original magazine versions, under their original titles, in the 1st (Winter 1966/67) and 3rd (Summer 1967) issues of *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION.*

Internal evidence suggests that the present story was written earlier than the two science fiction adventures, although it appeared in print nearly a year later.

I HAVE SELDOM been able to resist the allurement of a bookstore, particularly one that is well supplied with rare and exotic items. Therefore I turned in at Toleman's to browse around for a few minutes. I had come to San Francisco for one of my brief, bi-annual visits, and had started early that idle forenoon to an appointment with Cyprian Sincaul, the sculptor, a second or third cousin of mine, whom I had not seen for several years.

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His studio was only a block from Toleman's and there seemed to be no special object in reaching it ahead of time. Cyprian had offered to show me his collection of recent sculptures; but, remembering the smooth mediocrity of his former work, amid which were a few banal efforts to achieve horror and grotesquerie, I did not anticipate anything more than an hour or two of dismal boredom.

The little shop was empty of customers. Knowing my proclivities, the owner and his one assistant became tacitly non-attentive after a word of recognition, and left me to rummage at will among the curiously laden shelves. Wedged in between other but less alluring titles, I found a deluxe edition of Goya's *Proverbes*. I began to turn the heavy pages, and was soon

engrossed in the diabolic art of these nightmare-nurtured drawings.

It has always been incomprehensible to me that I did not shriek aloud with mindless, overmastering terror, when I happened to look up from the volume, and saw the thing that was crouching in a corner of the book-shelves before me. I could not have been more hideously startled if some hellish conception of Goya had suddenly come to life and emerged from one of the pictures in the folio.

What I saw was a forward-slouching, vermin-gray figure, wholly devoid of hair or down or bristles, but marked with faint, etiolated rings like those of a serpent that has lived in darkness. It possessed the head and brow of an anthropoid ape, a semi-canine mouth and jaw, and arms ending in twisted hands whose black hyena talons nearly scraped the floor. The thing was infinitely bestial, and at the same time, macabre; for its parchment skin was shriveled, corpselike, mummified, in a manner impossible to convey; and from eye sockets well-nigh deep as those of a skull, there glimmered evil slits of yellowish phosphorescence, like burning sulphur. Fangs that were stained as if with poison or gangrene, issued from the slavering, half-open mouth; and the whole attitude of the creature was that of some maleficent monster in readiness to spring.

Though I had been for years a professional writer of stories that often dealt with occult phenomena, with the weird and the spectral, I was not at this time possessed of any clear and settled belief regarding such phenomena. I had never before seen anything that I could identify as a phantom, nor even an hallucination; and I should hardly have said offhand that a bookstore on a busy street, in full summer daylight, was the likeliest of places in which to see one. But the thing before me was assuredly nothing that could ever exist among the permissible forms of a sane world. It was too horrific, too atrocious, to be anything but a creation of unreality.

Even as I stared across the Goya, sick with a half-incredulous fear, the apparition moved toward me. I say that it moved, but its change of position was so instantaneous, so utterly without

effort or visible transition, that the verb is hopelessly inadequate. The foul specter had seemed five or six feet away. But now it was stooping directly above the volume that I still held in my hands, with its loathsomely lambent eyes peering upward at my face, and a gray-green slime drooling from its mouth on the broad pages. At the same time I breathed an insupportable fetor, like a mingling of rancid serpent-stench with the moldiness of antique charnels and the fearsome reek of newly decaying carrion

In a frozen timelessness that was perhaps no more than a second or two, my heart appeared to suspend its beating, while I beheld the ghastly face. Gasping, I let the Goya drop with a resonant bang on the floor, and even as it fell, I saw that the vision had vanished.

Toleman, a tonsured gnome with shell-rimmed goggles, rushed forward to retrieve the fallen volume, exclaiming: "What is wrong, Mr. Hastane? Are you ill?" From the meticulousness with which he examined the binding in search of possible damage, I knew that his chief solicitude was concerning the Goya. It was plain that neither he nor his clerk had seen the phantom; nor could I detect aught in their demeanor to indicate that they had noticed the mephitic odor that still lingered in the air like an exhalation from broken graves. And, as far as I could tell, they did not even perceive the grayish slime that still polluted the open folio.

I do not remember how I managed to make my exit from the shop. My mind had become a seething blur of muddled horror, of crawling, sick revulsion from the supernatural vileness I had beheld, together with the direst apprehension for my own sanity and safety. I recall only that I found myself on the street above Toleman's, walking with feverish rapidity toward my cousin's studio, with a neat parcel containing the Goya volume under my arm. Evidently, in an effort to atone for my clumsiness, I must have bought and paid for the book by a sort of automatic impulse, without any real awareness of what I was doing.

I came to the building in which was my destination, but went on around the block several times before entering. All the while I fought desperately to regain my self-control and equipoise. I

remember how difficult it was even to moderate the pace at which I was walking, or refrain from breaking into a run; for it seemed to me that I was fleeing all the time from an invisible pursuer. I tried to argue with myself, to convince the rational part of my mind that the apparition had been the product of some evanescent trick of light and shade, or a temporary dimming of eyesight. But such sophistries were useless; for I had seen the gargoylish terror all too distinctly, in an unforgettable fullness of grisly detail.

What could the thing mean? I had never used narcotic drugs or abused alcohol. My nerves, as far as I knew, were in sound condition. But either I had suffered a visual hallucination that might mark the beginning of some obscure cerebral disorder, or had been visited by a spectral phenomenon, by something from realms and dimensions that are past the normal scope of human perception. It was a problem either for the alienist or the occultist.

Though I was still damnably upset, I contrived to regain a nominal composure of my faculties. Also, it occurred to me that the unimaginative portrait busts and tamely symbolic figure-groups of Cyprian Sincaul might serve admirably to soothe my shaken nerves. Even his grotesques would seem sane and ordinary by comparison with the blasphemous gargoyle that had drooled before me in the bookshop.

I entered the studio building, and climbed a worn stairway to the second floor, where Cyprian had established himself in a somewhat capacious suite of rooms. As I went up the stairs, I had the peculiar feeling that somebody was climbing them just ahead of me; but I could neither see nor hear anyone, and the hall above was no less silent and empty than the stairs.

Cyprian was in his atelier when I knocked. After an interval which seemed unduly long, I heard him call out, telling me to enter. I found him wiping his hands on an old cloth, and surmised that he had been modeling. A sheet of light burlap had been thrown over what was plainly an ambitious but unfinished group of figures, which occupied the center of the long room. All around were other sculptures, in clay, bronze, marble, and even

the terra-cotta and steatite which he sometimes employed for his less conventional conceptions. At one end of the room there stood a heavy Chinese screen.

At a single glance I realized that a great change had occurred, both in Cyprian Sincaul and his work. I remembered him as an amiable, somewhat flabby-looking youth, always dapperly dressed, with no trace of the dreamer or visionary. It was hard to recognize him now, for he had become lean, harsh, vehement, with an air of pride and penetration that was almost Luciferian. His unkempt mane of hair was already shot with white, and his eyes were electrically brilliant with a strange knowledge, and yet somehow were vaguely furtive, as if there dwelt behind them a morbid and macabre fear.

The change in his sculpture was no less striking. The respectable tameness and polished mediocrity were gone, and in their place, incredibly, was something little short of genius. More unbelievable still, in view of the laboriously ordinary grotesques of his earlier phase, was the trend that his art had now taken. All around me were frenetic, murderous demons, satyrs mad with nympholepsy, ghouls that seemed to sniff the odors of the charnel, lamias voluptuously coiled about their victims, and less namable things that belonged to the outland realms of evil myth and malign superstition.

Sin, horror, blasphemy, diablerie – the lust and malice of pandemonium – all had been caught with impeccable art. The potent nightmarishness of these creations was not calculated to reassure my trembling nerves; and all at once I felt an imperative desire to escape from the studio, to flee from the baleful throng of frozen cacodemons and chiseled chimeras.

My expression must have betrayed my feelings to some extent.

"Pretty strong work, aren't they?" said Cyprian, in a loud, vibrant voice, with a note of harsh pride and triumph. "I can see that you are surprised – you didn't look for anything of the sort, I dare say."

"No, candidly, I didn't," I admitted. "Good Lord, man, you will become the Michelangelo of diabolism if you go on at this rate. Where on earth do you get such stuff?"

"Yes, I've gone pretty far," said Cyprian, seeming to disregard my question. "Further even than you think, probably. If you could know what I know, could see what I have seen, you might make something really worthwhile out of your weird fiction, Philip. You are very clever and imaginative, of course. But you've never had any experience."

I was startled and puzzled. "Experience? What do you mean?"

"Precisely that. You try to depict the occult and the supernatural without even the most rudimentary firsthand knowledge of them. I tried to do something of the same sort in sculpture, years ago, without knowledge; and doubtless you recall the mediocre mess that I made of it. But I've learned a thing or two since then."

"Sounds as if you had made the traditional bond with the devil, or something of that sort," I observed, with a feeble and perfunctory levity.

Cyprian's eyes narrowed slightly, with a strange, secret look. "I know what I know. Never mind how or why. The world in which we live isn't the only world; and some of the others lie closer at hand than you think. The boundaries of the seen and the unseen are sometimes interchangeable."

Recalling the malevolent phantom, I felt a peculiar disquietude as I listened to his words. An hour before, his statement would have impressed me as mere theorizing, but now it assumed an ominous and terrifying significance.

"What makes you think I have had no experience of the occult?" I asked.

"Your stories hardly show anything of the kind – anything factual or personal. They are all palpably made up. When you've argued with a ghost, or watched the ghouls at mealtime, or fought with an incubus, or suckled a vampire, you may achieve some genius characterization and color along such lines."

For reasons that should be fairly obvious, I had not intended to tell anyone of the unbelievable thing at Toleman's. Now, with a singular mixture of emotions, of compulsive, eerie terrors and desire to refute the animal versions of Cyprian, I found myself describing the phantom.

He listened with an inexpressive look, as if his thoughts were occupied with other matters than my story. Then, when I had finished: "You are becoming more psychic than I imagined. Was your apparition anything like one of these?"

With the last words, he lifted the sheet of burlap from the muffled group of figures beside which he had been standing.

I cried out involuntarily with the shock of that appalling revelation, and almost tottered as I stepped back.

Before me, in a monstrous semi-circle, were seven creatures who might all have been modeled from the gargoyle that had confronted me across the folio of Goya drawings. Even in several that were still amorphous or incomplete, Cyprian had conveyed with a damnable art the peculiar mingling of primal bestiality and mortuary putrescence that had signalized the phantom. The seven monsters had closed in on a cowering, naked girl, and were all clutching foully toward her with their hyena claws. The stark, frantic, insane terror on the fact of the girl, and the slavering hunger of her assailants, were alike unbearable. The group was a masterpiece, in its consummate power of technique – but a masterpiece that inspired loathing rather than admiration. And following my recent experience, the sight of it affected me with indescribable alarm. It seemed to me that I had gone astray from the normal, familiar world into a land of detestable mystery, of prodigious and unnatural menace.

Held by an abhorrent fascination, it was hard for me to wrench my eyes away from the figure-piece. At last I turned from it to Cyprian himself. He was regarding me with a cryptic air, beneath which I suspected a covert gloating.

"How do you like my little pets?" he inquired. "I am going to call the composition *The Hunters from Beyond.*"

Before I could answer, a woman suddenly appeared from behind the Chinese screen. I saw that she was the model for the girl in the unfinished group. Evidently she had been dressing, and she was now ready to leave, for she wore a tailored suit and a smart toque. She was beautiful, in a dark, semi-Latin fashion; but her mouth was sullen and reluctant, and her wide, liquid eyes

were wells of strange terror as she gazed at Cyprian, myself and the uncovered statue-piece.

Cyprian did not introduce me. He and the girl talked together in low tones for a minute or two, and I was unable to overhear more than half of what they said. I gathered, however, that an appointment was being made for the next sitting. There was a pleading, frightened note in the girl's voice, together with an almost maternal concern; and Cyprian seemed to be arguing with her or trying to reassure her about something. At last she went out, with a queer, supplicative glance at me – a glance whose meaning I could only surmise and could not wholly fathom.

"That was Marta," said Cyprian. "She is half Irish, half Italian. A good model; but my new sculptures seem to be making her a little nervous." He laughed abruptly, with a mirthless, jarring note that was like the cachinnation of a sorcerer.

"In God's name, what are you trying to do here?" I burst out. "What does it all mean? Do such abominations really exist, on earth or in any hell?"

He laughed again, with an evil subtlety, and became evasive all at once. "Anything may exist, in a boundless universe with multiple dimensions. Anything may be real – or unreal. Who knows? It is not for me to say. Figure it out for yourself, if you can – there's a vast field for speculation – and perhaps for more than speculation."

With this, he began immediately to talk of other topics. Baffled, mystified, with a sorely troubled mind and nerves that were more unstrung than ever by the black enigma of it all, I ceased to question him. Simultaneously, my desire to leave the studio became almost overwhelming – a mindless, whirlwind panic that prompted me to run pell-mell from the room and down the stairs into the wholesome normality of the common, Twentieth Century streets. It seemed to me that the rays which fell through the skylight were not those of the sun, but of some darker orb; that the room was touched with unclean webs of shadows where shadow should not have been; that the stone Satans, the bronze lamias, the terracotta satyrs and the clay

gargoyles had somehow increased in number and might spring to malignant life at any instant.

Hardly knowing what I said, I continued to converse for a while with Cyprian. Then, excusing myself on the score of a nonexistent luncheon appointment, and promising vaguely to return for another visit before my departure from the city, I took my leave.

I was surprised to find my cousin's model in the lower hall, at the foot of the stairway. From her manner, and her first words, it was plain that she had been waiting.

"You are Mr. Philip Hastane, aren't you?" she said, in an eager, agitated voice. "I am Marta Fitzgerald. Cyprian has often mentioned you, and I believe that he admires you a lot.

"Maybe you'll think me crazy," she went on, "but I had to speak to you. I can't stand the way that things are going here, and I'd refuse to come to the place any more, if it wasn't that I – like Cyprian so well.

"I don't know what he has done – or what has been done to him – but he is altogether different from what he used to be. His new work is so horrible – you can't imagine how it frightens me. The sculptures he does are more hideous, more hellish all the time. Ugh! those drooling, dead-gray monsters in that new group of his – I can hardly bear to be in the studio with them. It isn't right for anyone to depict such things. Don't you think they are awful, Mr. Hastane? They look as if they had broken loose from hell – and make you think that hell can't be very far away. It is wrong and wicked for anyone to – even imagine them; and I wish that Cyprian would stop. I am afraid that something will happen to him – to his mind – if he goes on. And I'll go mad, too, if I have to see those monsters many more times. My God! No one could keep sane in that studio."

She paused, and appeared to hesitate. Then: "Can't you do something, Mr. Hastane? Can't you talk to him, and tell him how wrong it is, and how dangerous to his mental health? You must have a lot of influence with Cyprian – you are his cousin, aren't you? And he thinks you are very clever, too. I wouldn't ask you,

if I hadn't been forced to notice so many things that aren't as they should be.

"I wouldn't bother you, either, if I knew anyone else to ask. He has shut himself up in that awful studio for the past year, and he hardly ever sees anybody. You are the first person that he has invited to see his new sculptures. He wants them to be a complete surprise for the critics and the public, when he holds his next exhibition.

"But you'll speak to Cyprian, won't you, Mr. Hastane? I can't do anything to stop him – he seems to exult in the mad horrors he creates. And he merely laughs at me when I try to tell him the danger. However, I think that those things are making him a little nervous sometimes – that he is growing afraid of his own morbid imagination. Perhaps he will listen to you."

If I had needed anything more to unnerve me, the desperate pleading of the girl and her dark, obscurely baleful hintings would have been enough. I could see that she loved Cyprian, that she was frantically anxious concerning him, and hysterically afraid; otherwise, she would not have approached an utter stranger in this fashion.

"But I haven't any influence with Cyprian," I protested, feeling a queer embarrassment. "And what am I to say to him, anyway? Whatever he is doing is his own affair, not mine. His new sculptures are magnificent – I have never seen anything more powerful of the kind. and how could I advise him to stop doing them? There would be no legitimate reason; he would simply laugh me out of the studio. An artist has the right to choose his own subject-matter, even if he takes it from the nether pits of Limbo and Erebus."

The girl must have pleaded and argued with me for many minutes in that deserted hall. Listening to her and trying to convince her of my inability to fulfill her request. was like a dialog in some futile and tedious nightmare. During the course of it, she told me a few details that I am unwilling to record in this narrative; details that were too morbid and too shocking for belief, regarding the mental alteration of Cyprian, and his new subject-matter and method of work. There were direct and

oblique hints of a growing perversion; but somehow it seemed that much more was being held back; that even in her most horrifying disclosures she was not wholly frank with me. At last, with some sort of hazy promise that I would speak to Cyprian, would remonstrate with him, I succeeded in getting away from her, and returned to my hotel.

The afternoon and evening that followed were tinged as by the tyrrannous adumbration of an ill dream. I felt that I had stepped from the solid earth into a gulf of seething, menacing, madness-haunted shadow, and was lost henceforward to all rightful sense of location or direction. It was all too hideous – and too doubtful and unreal. The change in Cyprian himself was no less bewildering, and hardly less horrifying, than the vile phantom of the bookshop, and the demon sculptures that displayed a magisterial art. It was as if the man had become possessed by some satanic energy or entity.

Everywhere that I went, I was powerless to shake off the feeling of an intangible pursuit, of a frightful, unseen vigilance. It seemed to me that the worm-gray face and sulphurous eyes would reappear at any moment; that the semi-canine mouth with its gangrene-dripping fangs might come to slaver above the restaurant table at which I ate, or upon the pillow of my bed. I did not dare to reopen the purchased Goya volume, for fear of finding that certain pages were still defiled with a spectral slime.

I went out and spent the evening in cafes, in theaters, wherever people thronged and lights were bright. It was after midnight when I finally ventured to brave the solitude of my hotel bedroom. Then there were endless hours of nerve-wrung insomnia, of shivering, sweating apprehension beneath the electric bulb that I had left burning. Finally, a little before dawn, by no conscious transition and with no premonitory drowsiness, I fell asleep.

I remember no dreams – only the vast, incubus-like oppression that persisted even in the depth of slumber, as if to drag me down with its formless, ever-clinging weight into gulfs beyond the reach of created light or the fathoming of organized entity.

It was almost noon when I awoke, and found myself staring

into the verminous, apish, mummy-dead face and hell-illumined eyes of the gargoyle that had crouched before me in the corner at Toleman's. The thing was standing at the foot of my bed; and behind it as I stared, the wall of the room, which was covered with a floral paper, dissolved in an infinite vista of grayness, teeming with ghoulish forms that emerged like monstrous, misshapen bubbles from plains of undulant ooze and skies of serpentine vapor. It was another world, and my very sense of equilibrium was disturbed by an evil vertigo as I gazed. It seemed to me that my bed was heaving dizzily, was turning slowly, deliriously toward the gulf; that the feculent vista and the vile apparition were swimming beneath me; that I would fall toward them in another moment and be precipitated forever into the world of abysmal monstrosity and obscenity.

In a start of profound alarm, I fought my vertigo, fought the sense that another will than mine was drawing me, that the unclean gargoyle was luring me by some unspeakable mesmeric spell, as a serpent is said to lure its prey. I seemed to read a nameless purpose in its yellow-slitted eyes, in the soundless moving of its oozy lips; and my very soul recoiled with nausea and revulsion as I breathed its pestilential fetor.

Apparently, the mere effort of mental resistance was enough. The vista and the face receded; they went out in a swirl of daylight. I saw the design of tea roses on the wallpaper beyond; and the bed beneath me was sanely horizontal once more. I lay sweating with my terror, all adrift on a sea of nightmare surmise, of unearthly threat and whirlpool madness, till the ringing of the telephone bell recalled me automatically to the known world.

I sprang to answer the call. It was Cyprian, though I should hardly have recognized the dead, hopeless tones of his voice, from which the mad pride and self-assurance of the previous day had wholly vanished.

"I must see you at once," he said. "Can you come to the studio?"

I was about to refuse, to tell him that I had been called home suddenly, that there was no time, that I must catch the noon

train – any thing to avert the ordeal of another visit to that place of mephitic evil – when I heard his voice again.

"You simply must come, Philip. I can't tell you about it over the phone, but a dreadful thing has happened: Marta has disappeared."

I consented, telling him that I would start for the studio as soon as I had dressed. The whole nightmare had closed in, had deepened immeasurably with his last words; but, remembering the haunted face of the girl, her hysteric fears, her frantic plea and my vague promise, I could not very well decline to go.

I dressed and went out with my mind in a turmoil of abominable conjecture, of ghastly doubt, and apprehension all the more hideous because I was unsure of its object. I tried to imagine what had happened, tried to piece together the frightful, evasive, half-admitted hints of unknown terror into the tangible coherent fabric, but found myself involved in a chaos of shadowy menace.

I could not have eaten any breakfast, even if I had taken the necessary time. I went at once to the studio, and found Cyprian standing aimlessly amid his baleful statuary. His look was that of a man who has been stunned by the blow of some crushing weapon, or has gazed on the very face of Medusa. He greeted me in a vacant manner, with dull, toneless words. Then, like a charged machine, as if his body rather than his mind were speaking, he began at once to pour forth the atrocious narrative.

"They took her," he said, simply. "Maybe you didn't know it, or weren't sure of it; but I've been doing all my new sculptures from life – even that last group. Marta was posing for me this forenoon – only an hour ago – or less. I had hoped to finish her part of the modeling today; and she wouldn't have had to come again for this particular piece. I hadn't called the Things this time, since I knew she was beginning to fear them more and more. I think she feared them on my account more than her own – and they were making me a little uneasy too, by the boldness with which they sometimes lingered when I had ordered them to leave, and the way they would sometimes appear when I didn't want them.

"I was busy with some of the final touches on the girl-figure, and wasn't even looking at Marta, when suddenly I knew that the Things were there. The smell told me, if nothing else – I guess you know what the smell is like. I looked up, and found that the studio was full of them – they had never before appeared in such numbers. They were surrounding Marta, were crowding and jostling each other, were all reaching toward her with their filthy talons; but even then, I didn't think that they could harm her. They aren't material beings, in the sense that we are, and they really have no physical power outside their own plane. All that they do have is a sort of snaky mesmerism, and they'll always try to drag you down to their own dimension by means of it. God help anyone who yields to them; but you don't have to go, unless you are weak, or willing. I've never had any doubt of my power to resist them, and I didn't really dream they could do anything to Marta.

"It startled me, though, when I saw the whole crowding hell-pack, and I ordered them to go pretty sharply. I was angry – and somewhat alarmed, too. But they merely grimaced and slavered, with that slow, twisting movement of their lips that is like a voiceless gibbering, and then they closed in on Marta, just as I represented them doing in that accursed group of sculpture. Only there were scores of them now, instead of merely seven.

"I can't describe how it happened, but all at once their foul talons had reached the girl; they were pawing her, were pulling at her hands, her arms, her body. She screamed – and I hope I'll never hear another scream so full of black agony and soul-unhinging fright. Then I knew that she had yielded to them – either from choice, or from excess of terror – and knew that they were taking her away.

"For a moment, the studio wasn't there at all – only a long, gray, oozing plain, beneath skies where the fumes of hell were writhing like a million ghostly and distorted dragons. Marta was sinking into that ooze, and the Things were all about her, gathering in fresh hundreds from every side, fighting each other for place, sinking with her like bloated, misshaped fen-creatures into their native slime. Then everything vanished – and I

was standing here in the studio, all alone with these damned sculptures."

He paused for a little, and stared with dreary, desolate eyes at the floor. Then: "It was awful, Philip, and I'll never forgive myself for having anything to do with those monsters. I must have been a little mad, but I've always had a strong ambition to create some real stuff in the field of the grotesque and visionary and macabre. I don't suppose you ever suspected, back in my stodgy phase, that I had a veritable appetence for such things. I wanted to do in sculpture what Poe and Lovecraft and Baudelaire have done in literature, what Rops and Goya did in pictorial art.

"That was what led me into the occult, when I realized my limitations. I knew that I had to *see* the dwellers of the invisible worlds before I could depict them. I wanted to do it. I longed for this power of vision and representation more than anything else. And then, all at once, I found that I had the power of summoning the unseen . . .

"There was no magic involved in the usual sense of the word—no spells and circles, no pentacles and burning gums from old sorcery books. At bottom, it was just will-power, I guess—will to divine the satanic, to summon the innumerable malignities and grotesqueries that people other planes than ours, or mingle unperceived with humanity.

"You've no idea what I have beheld, Philip. These statues of mine – these devils, vampires, lamias, satyrs – were all done from life, or, at least from recent memory. The originals are what the occultists would call elementals, I suppose. There are endless worlds, contiguous to our own, or coexisting with it, that such beings inhabit. All the creations of myth and fantasy, all the familiar spirits that sorcerers have evoked, are resident in these worlds.

"I made myself their master, I levied upon them at will. Then, from a dimension that must be a little lower than all others, a little nearer the ultimate nadir of hell, I called the innominate beings who posed for this new figure-piece.

"I don't know what they are, but I have surmised a good deal.

They are hateful as the worms of the Pit, they are malevolent as harpies, they drool with a poisonous hunger not to be named or imagined. But I believed that they were powerless to do anything outside their own sphere, and I've always laughed at them when they tried to entice me – even though that snakish mental pull of theirs was rather creepy at times. It was as if soft, invisible, gelatinous arms were trying to drag you down from the firm shore into a bottomless bog.

"They are hunters – I am sure of that – the hunters from Beyond. God knows what they will do to Marta now that they have her at their mercy. That vast, viscid, miasma-haunted place to which they took her is awful beyond the imagining of a Satan. Perhaps – even there – they couldn't harm her body. But bodies aren't what they want – it isn't for human flesh that they grope with those ghoulish claws, and gape and slaver with those gangrenous mouths. The brain itself – and the soul, too – is their food: they are creatures who prey on the minds of madmen and madwomen, who devour the disembodied spirits that have fallen from the cycles of incarnation, have gone down beyond the possibility of rebirth.

"To think of Marta in their power – it is worse than hell or madness. Marta loved me, and I loved her, too, though I didn't have the sense to realize it, wrapped as I was in my dark, baleful ambition and impious egotism. She was afraid for me, and I believe she surrendered voluntarily to the Things. She must have thought that they would leave me alone if they secured another victim in my place."

He ceased and began to pace idly and feverishly about. I saw that his hollow eyes were alight with torment, as if the mechanical telling of his horrible story had in some manner served to requicken his crushed mind. Utterly and starkly appalled by his hideous revelations, I could say nothing, but could only stand and watch his torture-twisted face.

Incredibly, his expression changed, with a wild, startled look that was instantly transfigured into joy. Turning to follow his gaze, I saw that Marta was standing in the center of the room.

She was nude, except for a Spanish shawl that she must have worn while posing. Her face was bloodless as the marble of a tomb, and her eyes were wide and blank, as if she had been drained of all life, of all thought or emotion or memory, as if even the knowledge of horror had been taken away from her. It was the face of the living dead, the soulless mask of ultimate idiocy; and the joy faded from Cyprian's eyes as he stepped toward her.

He took her in his arms, he spoke to her with a desperate, loving tenderness, with cajoling and caressing words. She made no answer, however, no movement of recognition or awareness, but stared beyond him with her blank eyes, to which the daylight and the darkness, the void air and her lover's face, would henceforward be the same. He and I both knew, in that instant, that she would never again respond to any human voice, or to human love or terror; that she was like an empty cerement, retaining the outward form of that which the worms have eaten in their mausolean darkness.Of the noisome pits wherein she had been, of that bournless realm and its pullulating phantoms, she could tell us nothing: her agony had ended with the terrible mercy of complete forgetfulness.

Like one who confronts the Gorgon, I was frozen by her wide and sightless gaze. Then, behind her, where stood an array of carven Satans and lamias, the room seemed to recede, the walls and floor dissolved in a seething, unfathomable gulf, amid whose pestilential vapors the statues were mingled in momentary and loathsome ambiguity with the ravening faces, the hunger-contorted forms that swirled toward us from their ultra-dimensional limbo like a devil-laden hurricane from Malebolge. Outlined against that boiling, measureless cauldron of malignant storm, Marta stood like an image of glacial death and silence in the arms of Cyprian. Then, once more, after a little, the abhorrent vision faded, leaving only the diabolic statuary.

I think that I alone had beheld it; that Cyprian had seen nothing but the dead face of Marta. He drew her close, he repeated his hopeless words of tenderness and cajolery. Then,

suddenly, he released her with a vehement sob of despai Turning away, while she stood and still looked on with unseein eyes, he snatched a heavy sculptor's mallet from the table o which it was lying, and proceeded to smash with furious blow the newly-modeled group of gargoyles, till nothing was left bu the figure of the terror maddened girl, crouching above a mass c cloddish fragments and formless, half dried clay.

Inquisitions

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

by Harry Warner, Jr.

(Introduction by Wilson Tucker)

Advent: Publishers, Inc.; PO Box 9228, Chicago, Illinois 60690; 336 pp including index, plus xxi pages of introductory matter; $7.50.

While I felt that I could comment upon the Edgar Allan Poe anthology, reviewed last issue, with reasonable objectivity, I am entirely sure that I cannot be objective about a book which has so much of me in it as this one does. I can only say that Warner has done an excellent job, and that through not only facing but openly acknowledging his biases from the very start, he has succeeded in being much more fair to me and to other persons I knew in those days than he possibly could have been had he tried to pretend he had no biases or was unaware of them.

While this deals with the many, many faces of fandom in the 40s, it must necessarily include a great deal of material from the 30s, as well as some from the 20s and still earlier. The summaries of these earlier days is excellent indeed, and I found myself going back to the first page and re-reading the book as soon as I'd finished it once. (To see if, on second and somewhat slower reading, it was really that good: it was.)

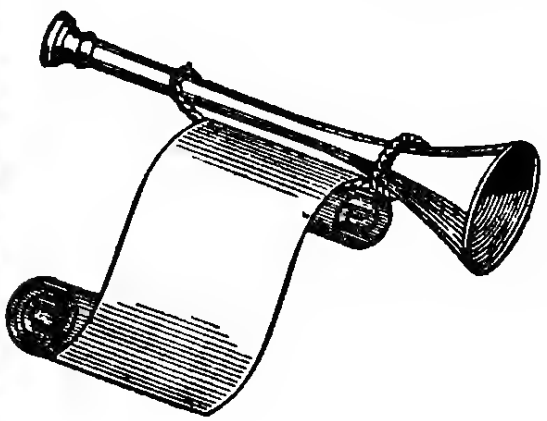
There are so many things which I'd forgotten, some of them brought back to memory with pleasure, some with a wry feeling, and some which somehow sound right, even though I just cannot recall them. (Example: the account of my getting my foot stuck in a cuspidor in Chicago, 1940: I can't remember it, but somehow it feels right, and anyway it's too good a story to argue about.) And our historian's restraint constantly arouses my admiration – and gratitude: if I regret that a little more juicy details were not given about some I knew – or knew of – in those days, it's more than balanced out by appreciation of Warner's

omitting various true details that come too close to my home for comfort.

A few minor errors could yet stand correction: 2574 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, was not the address of Futurian House (1939) but of the Ivory Tower (1939/1940); Futurian House was on East 4th Street in Brooklyn. The Futurian Embassy (1941/1942) was never inhabited by Daniel Burford; Damon Knight was the third man there. Station X was at 313 West Fourth Street in Manhattan, not Brooklyn. And my weekly fan magazine, *Le Vombiteur* did not become a giveaway until late in 1939; 24 weekly issues were published starting December 1, 1938 and offered for sale @ 5 cents the copy, 6 for 25 cents. It's true, though, that perhaps 50% of the hektograph run was sent out gratis for at least half of that time – but subscriptions were nonetheless hoped for. It became free after I could no longer even hope for regular publication. (I might add, though, that Warner has the kaleidescopic shiftings of the Futurians and the addresses of the various dwellings more nearly correct than anyone else thus far: Jack Speer's first *Fancyclopedia* was a mine of misinformation on these details, though, as I recall, reasonably accurate in other respects.)

This is a gratifying long book, very well printed, with well chosen and tastefully laid out photographs. $7.95 is a low price indeed for what you get. My appetite is now well whetted for the implied volume covering the 50s, even though I do not expect to find myself mentioned often therein – or should I say particularly because? At any rate, may this book run into many printings as well as soft cover editions; sometimes merit *is* rewarded in this world, so my wish isn't too unrealistic. RAWL

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Tales From Cornwall

by David H. Keller, M. D.

(author of *The Abyss, Heredity,* etc.)

NO. 7 NO OTHER MAN

While this is the seventh in the over-all series of Tales From Cornwall, it is the third of five dealing with Cecil, Overlord of Cornwall. It followed *The Battle of the Toads* and *The Tailed Man of Cornwall* in rapid succession in *WEIRD TALES,* in 1929; then nearly a year passed before we saw the next story; the fifth has never been published. DAVID H. KELLER, M.D. (1880-1966) already had a substantial reputation among lovers of fantasy, science fiction, and weird tales before September 1929, when the first of his Cornwall stories to be published appeared. Followers of *WEIRD TALES* had seen memorable short-short stories, such as *The Dogs of Salem,* and *The Jelly Fish;* lovers of science fiction had seen *The Revolt of the Pedestrians, The Menace* (where Taine of San Francisco made his first appearance in print), and *The Psychophonic Nurse;* and the powerful (albeit implausible) *The Human Termites* was running simultaneously in the October issue of *SCIENCE WONDER STORIES.* Needless to say, the Cecil sequence was unlike anything that had been seen from Dr. Keller's hands before, and the readers' requests for more were loud and persistent.

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ARGUMENT WITH DATES

200 B. C. – Folkes-King Eric rules in Wearfold, Norway. Olaf is Lord of the House of the Wolves in Jutland.

190 B. C. – Balder, son of Olaf, is born.

189 B. C. – Thyra, daughter of Eric, is born.

171 B. C. – Balder adventures to Wearfold, kills a giant and marries Thyra.

170 B. C. – Holga, oldest son of Balder, is born.

140 B. C. – Odin, only son of Holga, is born.

100 B. C. – The Wolves are driven from Jutland by the Norsemen. Balder is transmuted into an oak tree. Under the command of Lord Holga the Wolves sail southwest and find a new home in Armorica.

99 B. C. – Harold, son of Odin, is born.

77 B. C. – Edward, son of Harold, is born.

58 B. C. – Edward adventures to the east and marries an eagle. She lays an egg, hatches a boy, changes to a woman and calls her son Cecil.

57 B. C. – Caesar invades Gaul. The Wolves flee to Cornwall. Lord Harold dies and his son Edward becomes Lord. The family name is changed to Hubelaire.

43 A. D. – Claudius conquers most of England and builds the Hadrian Wall.

350 A. D. – The Romans are driven from England.

400 A. D. – The Hubelaires are never conquered, but repeated sieges of their castle, destruction of their lands and frequent pestilences so weaken them that they leave Cornwall and sail to the Isle of Lundy in the Hungry Sea. Here they build a walled town and live at peace for thirty years.

430 A. D. – The Rathlings invade Lundy and attack the Hubelaires. After long fighting with heavy losses on both sides, peace is declared; but the Rathlings remain in Lundy.

440 A. D. – The Rathlings break the peace and kill all the Hubelaires; but Raymond the Golden, before his death, becomes the father of two sons, Raymond and Doom.

462 A. D. – Raymond and Doom destroy the Rathlings and then sail to Armorica, where they establish the little kingdom of Walling.

782 A. D. – Cecil is Lord of the Hubelaires in Walling. His only daughter, Angelica, dies, after destroying a giant.

783 A. D. – Cecil, nephew of Lord Cecil, adventures to Cornwall and becomes the Overlord of that country. He lives in the castle of the Hubelaires, first occupied by his family in 57 B. C. He helps Lord FitzHugh marry Queen Broda of Ireland.

EVER SINCE I SLEW the dragon of Thorp's Woods, the people of Cornwall thought all they need do in time of trouble was to come to me. For a while I tried to be considerate, thinking it was part of my duties as Overlord of Cornwall to kill serpents, hang robbers, destroy giants and, in every way, make the country a pleasant and safe place to live in. Unfortunately

these high ideals left little leisure to devote to my reading and the writing of my autobigraphy. Often I was no sooner back from one adventure, comfortably clad in velvets and starting to write my book, than a fresh emergency made it necessary to don my armor once again and sally forth to punish more brigands or sever the head of another slithering snake. In winter the harness and armor were so cold that only after some hours of riding did my gooseflesh subside and enable me to ride my charger with any comfort.

Finally, for some weeks, everything was quiet in Cornwall. If any dragons remained, they thought it best to hide in their secret caves. All the robbers had fled to Wales or Armorica.

The slain giants were rotting in their gore. As far as my sway extended, all was peaceful, and I felt I had earned a period of relaxation. Though it was early spring, it was still cold and the roads were deep in mire. My stallion was comfortable, kneedeep in straw and munching the best grain my peasants could raise. I had large logs in the fireplace, new cushions to sit on, a woolen shawl for my knees and another for my shoulders, and wine on the table. I kept writing the history of my life, which was rapidly being filled with weird and unusual adventures. Why should I worry about wrongs done in Wales or the lands of the Irish and Scots?

Then, after three weeks of comfort, two old folks came, bringing with them a long parchment, bearing the signature of Cadwyn, King of Wales. I had heard rumors that Harold had been poisoned but had paid them no heed since the Welsh were given to changing their kings, in one way or another, every few months. But the parchment with signature and seal had so impressed my seneschal that he had admitted the old man and woman bearing the parchment and even brought them to the door of the library. When I tossed the paper to one side, refused to see them, and ordered them fed and removed from the castle, they raised such a lamentation that I ordered them fed at once, after which I promised to listen to their story.

They were cold and wet, so I placed them by the fire and requested them for the sake of good Saint Jerome, to fill up and

get warm. Thus I gained an extra half-hour to write in my book and when I saw this much time had slipped down the narrow channel of the sand-glass, during which period I had written two pages, I was very much cheered and almost tempted to be civil to my plebeian visitors.

The story they told was a familiar one. Their daughter had been stolen and they believed she was being held a prisoner in one of the mountain caves a dozen miles from their hut. What manner of man or beast had done this foul deed they knew not; there were strange tales about the horrific fiends who inhabited that particular mountain. They had been to see their king and he had asked his knights to rescue the maiden, but one and all refused to undertake the adventure. The king decided to tell me about the wrong done to these ancients and ask me to right it. As they became more excited, they raised their hands and cried that never was there such a lovely maiden as their daughter or one so pure, and why had the Saints permitted this terrible thing to happen to her?

Naturally I was sorry for them, but I was irritated, for it seemed to me that I was being imposed upon and that the knights of Wales ought to attend to their own giants and dragons; so, when they finally came to the end of their tale, I gruffly said: "Why come to me with your troubles? Any brave man can find your daughter and there must be many a valiant knight in your own land."

At that they cried out that I was wrong, and the woman said over and over again, "No other man! No other man! No other man!" – which was all stupid nonsense, both foolish and far from the truth.

However, it all ended in my telling them to go to bed and sleep and promising that on the morrow I would return with them and see what could be done concerning the rescue of their daughter, though I doubted that she was still alive. Sending them off to a good night's rest, I ordered fresh logs put on the fire and some spiced beer warmed for my comfort and then started to read the adventures of a good knight named Hercules, who was either a better fighter or a better liar than I could ever hope to be.

Finally, I sought the warmth of my featherbed and, disturbed in mind, waited for what the morrow might bring.

The next day, in a drizzle of rain, we started for some town in Wales, the proper sounding of whose name I never did learn. The old dame and her man rode slowly ahead on two sorry pads, while I rode behind them on my favorite stallion.

The woolens and leather I wore under my armor had been well warmed and greased ere I donned them, but the day was chill and in no time at all I became depressed by the cold of my armor. I tried to pass the time reciting Latin verbs, which made the old folks shiver and cross themselves, for they thought my mutterings to be imprecations and incantations against the power of the Evil One. Now and then my stallion reared in the air and neighed, perhaps for his warm stall and hearty meals of grain, or perhaps for some other reason, but I promptly forced him down to earth on all fours.

So we rode for the space of five days. At night we slept where we could and by day we rode and suffered from the cold rains. I had gold with me and could pay for the best, but even the best was sorry worst, and ever and again I sighed for my velvets, fire, good beer and fascinating manuscripts. Even the memory of *Elephantis* failed to keep me warm. Yet an end finally came and we arrived at the hut of the old man and his wife. It was still raining and the sky was lowering; yet, through the gloom, I could see the dark mountains far in the distance, covered with mighty trees and holding in their mysterious fastnesses the lovely daughter and the unknown monster who had torn her from her parental home.

The news of our arrival spread through the little town and all the simple folk flocked to see the giant-killer, and whether they were disappointed by my looks, I wot not; at least they made no unfavorable comments. However, since I had come all this long five-days' journey to accomplish another wonderful feat of chivalry, I was pleased to talk to these humble folks, for I wished to learn all there was to be known about the land, and the special variety of monsters it harbored, and just how this maiden had

been taken, and what manner of fiend had done the deed, for I had found such preliminary investigation to be of the greatest value in winning victory over the Powers of Darkness. Also I was glad to have some of the kindly peasants carefully dry and oil my armor and rub over my muscles a special, sacred oil brought from the Holy Land, being from the body of a great saint who had been boiled alive; this oil was very comforting in both a physical and a religious sense.

All of the men told a different tale about the monster. None had actually seen it, but all agreed it was a twenty-ell serpent, had the shape of a great unicorn, a headless man with eyes in his belly, a bull with the head of a man, a real dragon who had wandered to Wales from Tartary or a three-headed giant. All stated that it was very horrible and could easily kill, simply by blowing a flame of fire on the unfortunate victim's face. The usual weapons were powerless. Steel could not cut, lance could not pierce, mace could not crush. The more they talked, the more peculiar I felt and the more clearly I saw why the knights of Wales were too busy to take any part in the rescue of this maiden, irrespective of her beauty and the customary reward. It was really a very awkward situation.

They all seemed very happy over my arrival and said again and again that if human man could kill this monster, the giant-killer from Cornwall could. I assured them that I was confident I could find the maiden and rid their land of this foul animal, be it man, beast, or demon. At that, a very old man knelt before me and with humble thanks said that he would give me fifty gold crowns if I did so, as he was betrothed to the maiden, having purchased her from her father and that the wedding would have been consummated ere now had the fiend from the mountain not taken her.

I looked at the old man, his withered face, shrunken frame and scanty white hair. The more I saw of him the less I liked him, and I thought to myself that perhaps the maiden was better off in the mountains than in his house. In fact, I suddenly grew sick of the entire adventure and demanded that I be escorted to my room and left to sleep till the morrow. They did as I commanded, and I

spent a restless night tossing on a couch of corn shucks, sorely missing my warm featherbed.

The next morning all the townspeople gathered to see me put on my armor, and after that had been done I drank a quart of beer—moodily, for it was poor stuff. Then, sad of heart, I mounted my horse and rode toward the mountain. A priest strode ahead of me, singing a prayer; the old man and woman walked on either side of my horse, while the old lover hobbled behind me, urging me to guard myself well and saying repeatedly that he surely would give me the promised fifty crowns.

The old woman kept muttering, "No other man would do it. *No other man.*"

"Would be such a fool," I added in a whisper. "No other man. Many of the men I have read of, such as Launcelot, Bevin, or Ulysses would have been glad to adventure thus; but only I, who have cleared my own country of such monsters, would be fool enough to do such dirty work for the cowardly men of Wales."

The old husband, the priest and the senile lover took up the chant, "No other man would do it. No other man!" Finally we came to the edge of the wood and within a mile of the mountain, where they paused, saying they dare not go further with me, but would return home and wait, praying for my safe return.

The trees were so close together that I could not ride my charger, so I dismounted, tied him to a tree and then looked into the woods. It was dark and feyish, yet through the trees came glittering, glistening shafts of golden sunshine, and far away, I heard a thrush sing and a squirrel chatter in the treetops. Then I knew that I was in the Enchanted Forest, for here was springtime and pleasant weather. It being warm, I took a new view of the situation and I decided that I could not fight well with all my armor on; so, back to the horse and there I made myself comfortable, and, when I next wended into the woods, I was clothed in woolens only. My great sword was over my back, my shield was on one arm, a dagger in my belt and a lovely woods-flower in my right hand.

Thus, on to the rocks, and, nearing them, I heard the sound of

singing, and the song was about love and roses and ladies' tresses. I marveled at this and knew it was weird legerdemain. Further on I wandered, and suddenly I came upon the singer, whereat I was greatly frightened. For I knew now that I was in the midst of a great mystery and a most powerful magic. This evil beast who had stolen the poor girl from her parents, by his cunning and in preparation for my arrival, changed his ugly body into that of a lovely damsel, and was waiting to deceive me and, when I was unaware, to kill me with his poison and his mighty power.

I knew that it was useless to cut such a being with a sword or pierce it with a dagger, his body being so much thin air. In such a conflict, weapons of ordinary use were powerless. So I slowly discarded my shield, sword and dagger and, holding the woods-flower in my outstretched hand, I closed for the conflict.

"Though you are a mystic magician, " I cried, "I command you to give me the poor little girl you stole from her parents on Ash Wednesday. Give her to me, and if she is safe I will not harm you; but if you persist, I will match my magic against yours and overcome you."

"Who are you?" demanded the demon. "Why are you here?"

I could tell from the way he questioned me that he was much impressed by my threat.

"I am Cecil Hubelaire, son of James, and grandson of David, and Raymond the Golden was my distant ancester. Latterly I have become Overlord of Cornwall. You may be interested to know that I killed the dragon of Thorp's Woods and destroyed seven slithering, shimmering snakes in Ireland which Saint Patrick failed to kill, so that I finished the task he began. Alone and unaided, I made an ending of five Moors who threatened the reputation of a fair Spanish lady, after which she rewarded me in a manner that was most pleasing to each of us. In my land of Conwall I caught twenty-three bandits, and hanged them as a warning to all evildoers."

I paused to watch the effect of all this. There was no doubt that the fiend was considerably disturbed, so I continued. "In this country a poor girl—who, by the way, was to marry a very rich man—was ravished from her parents. They appealed to the

King of Wales and he pleaded with his knights to rescue her, but all refused, claiming they were too busy. The king sent a very urgent letter to me, and for five days I rode over the worst possible roads to perform this great adventure. It would be better if you submit quietly and allow me to restore the maiden to her parents and future husband. If you refuse, I shall needs fight and will surely overcome you, irrespective of what shape you may assume."

At this the monster started to cry. "I will never go back and marry that miserable old man. It would be better for me to die!" It was easily apparent that this was only part of the deception the horrific monster was trying to impose upon me; so I grew stern.

"She must go back," I cried harshly, and, twirling the woods-flower in my hand to distract his attention, I advanced on him, for it was my purpose to spring forward suddenly, take him by the throat and choke him to death before he had a chance to change his form from that of a beautiful woman to his usual dragon shape or that of a six-legged scorpion.

The monster looked at me. The eyes he had assumed were blue, the face fair and smooth as a rose petal, and his mouth was a lovely red bow. It was easily seen that the body he had taken as disguise was fair, for the silken robe clung seductively to curves worthy of Aphrodite. Suddenly he cried out loudly. "No other man," he sobbed, "would make me go back and marry that horrible old lecher!" But by that time I leaped forward and was crushing him in my arms.

Some days later I came out of the dark forest. My poor charger, having eaten all the grass within his reach, had broken loose but, true to his master, had remained near the armor. Slowly I put on the heavy pieces and, mounted the faithful animal, prepared to return to the town. So I rode away from the mountain—with the damsel in front of me.

To my surprise I was met by a great concourse of armed men. It seems that King Cadwyn, hearing that I had gone into the mountains on a desperate adventure, had gathered his knights

and come to my rescue. Had I not presented myself that day, they would have searched for my bones to give them Christian burial. My sudden appearance made such a search unnecessary; so there was nothing to do but make merry over my safe return from so great a derring-do and allow feasting to replace the proposed solemn masses for my soul.

At the banquet table I requested that the damsel sit beside me, saying that there were very impressive reasons why this should be so. Then came feasting and talking, the Welsh being very brave at both such sports. King Cadwyn told how proud they all were to have the Overlord of Cornwall take part in such a glorious and valorous undertaking; the girl's father stammered his joy and thanksgiving for her safe return; the aged gallant handed me a silken bag holding the fifty crowns he had promised me as a reward. Then he begged the monarch that the wedding take place while all the nobility of Wales were there, and promised to give fine presents to each guest.

But I rose from my seat and said, "I cannot let this man die!"

"What do you mean?" asked the King.

"To explain," I replied, "will be a pleasure, though I cannot do so without telling of my overcoming this great Welsh monster in his mountain cave. If, in the telling, at times I seem boastful, you will pardon my pride; for, in truth, the feat was a great deed and well done. I do not wish to relate all the details, for they, in part, are so terrible that the women, listening, would swoon from fright. I will simply explain why it is impossible for this worthy man to marry the damsel, because he is a good man and I do not want him to die.

"When I entered the dark woods I heard a horrible hissing and knew by the terrifying sound that the monster was trying to frighten me. Leaving my horse, I advanced cautiously. As the woods grew darker, I saw flashes of lightning and knew that the eyes of the dragon emitted these flames. Finally I was near enough to see the creature, and you may judge of my amazement when I tell you that it was a worm, many ells long, but instead of feet like a millipede it had arms and hands, and each hand grasped a weapon, sharp as a dagger and poisoned with deadly

dragon's doom. He had three heads, and I may remark here that a three-headed monster is not new to me, I having killed several of them in Gorkiland; but only one head of this monster had a face; the other two being smooth of features, save for mouths that dripped blood and spittal. It showed no signs of fear but rushed at me, and for over an hour I had need of all my skill in defending myself from its weapons. I used, as is my wont in such battles, my two-handed sword and finally succeeded in cutting off one of the heads. The monster howled dismally and ran into its cave.

"I rushed after it and was not surprised to find that its home was a large cavern well lighted by the baleful glare from the monster's eyes. The headless stump oozed a white blood which shone on the floor of the cave. The fighting was now most terrible and difficult, because I was constantly stumbling over the bones of maidens he had previously ravaged and devoured. After a long and bitter struggle I snipped off another head, and now the monster retreated into a smaller cave. Chained to the wall of this cavern was the poor little girl who had been stolen from her parents and would have been destroyed, body and soul, at the next full moon, had I not come when, in desperation, your brave King sent for me.

"The dragon now assumed the shape of an old magician and, breathing harshly, asked me to leave in peace, offering to share the beauty of the maiden with me if I did as he requested. Naturally, I scorned such a dastardly suggestion and, calling on him to defend himself, rushed on him with dagger in hand. Seeing that he was doomed by the power of my magic, he metamorphosed himself into a bubble of air and vanished down the maiden's throat.

"I have brought her back, but the monster is still within her, waiting for a chance to issue forth and destroy all you good people of Wales. If she marries this man, the monster will sally forth on the bridal night and tear the poor bridegroom to pieces. If she remains here, the whole village is in danger. The world is safe only as long as the demon realizes that I am close at hand to strangle him at his first appearance."

The audience shivered and seemed stunned by my tale.

"What are your plans?" the king asked, pale and shaken. "And why should you undergo such a risk to save the life of one man or all the simple folk of this village?"

"I propose to take this unfortunate damsel with me to Cornwall. During the journey I shall watch her closely. If the monster comes out of her, I will at once kill him and return her to her parents and her betrothed. If the fiend still sulks in her midgut by the time I reach Cornwall, I shall give her rare medicine I know of and thus, gradually, the fiend will die. I am a lone man, without wife or children, and it is better for me to take this great risk than to have all these good people die in one night of slaughter, horrible even to imagine. I know a lot about such demons and their course of action, and thus it is better for me to keep the damsel near me till he is utterly destroyed."

"Oh, kind sir!" cried the mother. "How can we thank you? You are too good to us. No other man would have done all these wondrous things just for strangers. I will feel so safe with my daughter in your care!"

And the aged one came to me on his knees and humbly handed me a gold chain and thanked me for saving him from a horrible tearing at the hands of this deformed beast from Hell.

It was now late in the afternoon, yet, as the day was warm, I insisted that I depart at once for Cornwall; so I mounted my charger with the damsel pillioned before me. Tied to the back of my saddle was a bundle of presents—jewels and fine silken goods—from the king and his knights. I wore all my armor save my helmet, which I had tied to the saddle, and in its place I wore a little velvet cap.

We said kind farewells to all of these Welsh people.

King Cadwyn rode down the narrow path beside me.

"Art sure, dear sibling," he asked, as he turned to leave me, "art sure the damsel hath a devil in her?"

"Certainly," I replied very seriously.

"Then she be a true woman," he answered, "for all women I have ever known are thus inhabited."

With this he winked at me, and trotted back to where his knights awaited him.

Ruth and I fared on through the summer afternoon. More and more, as the sun lowered in the kindly sky, she leaned heavily against me; and now and then she sighed as she looked at me with those deep blue eyes and asked, "Dost see aught of the monster peering from my mouth?"

"Nay," I replied, holding her closer so that she be not frightened.

"Yet I fear me that it cometh out. Drive it back, my heart!" and so I did with kisses.

How stubborn that devil was! How hard to drive back!

Finally she gasped. "No other man," she whispered, "would have done it as you did."

'No other man!" I echoed.

And once again I drove the devil back from her mouth.

The Reckoning

Only one story gave any competition to the winner this time (No. 29, September), and that was the fourth of the series of Tales From Cornwall. While a few do not care for these stories, or, though liking them, do not feel that they belong in MOH, more than 80% of you, the active readers, are loud in favor of them. Here is how your votes rated the issue.

(1) *Guatemozin the Visitant,* Arthur J. Burks; (2) *The Case of the Sinister Shape,* Gordon MacCreagh; (3) *The Thirty and One,* David H. Keller, M.D.; (4) *Portaits by Jacob Pitt,* Steven Lott; (5) *The Red Sail,* Charles Hilan Craig.

Here's an oddity: Although the MacCreagh story was never in first place, and Dr. Keller pulled out in front of the winner several times during the race, the Dr. Muncing tale finally nosed ahead of the Cornwall story to clinch second place.

MATERIALIST

by Janet Fox

More than a few upsetting tales have been written through the process of taking a well known saying and twisting it cruelly.

SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY Barbara arranged the crisp, unscented yellow roses, unconsciously liking the imminent danger afforded by the long spines on the crooked stems. She was a slender, white-faced young woman who would never be pretty but was given a look of elegance by the starkly expensive sapphire blue dress she wore.

The gray-walled, gray carpeted room was blood-tinted by fading sunlight, and the old man lay somewhere between resting and sleeping, his eyes narrowed to slits in the parchment texture of his face. He was a fragile husk beneath the gray satin bedspread. Barbara could remember him as large boned and ruddy, a presence impossible to ignore, but day by day the cancer had drawn him farther away until he seemed almost lost in distance. Sometimes the will to live could be seen to flicker behind the muddy translucency of his face like a candle flame caught in an irrestible wind.

She finished the flowers and looked on the stiff and formal arrangement with satisfaction. She turned to look on her dying husband, and her expression did not change.

"Barbara?"

"Yes, Frank, I'm here."

He struggled to sit upright. "I was falling off the edge of a

cliff; something was pulling at my feet and below me was nothing but darkness. I held on and it was hard, but I pulled myself back toward the light, back into this room."

"You were dreaming."

"I think I was dying. But I'm strong, Barby. I'm stronger than anybody thinks."

"Of course you are, but you should lie back and rest." She shuddered inwardly as the old man's skeleton hand clasped her thin wrist.

"I don't want to give anything up, Barby. I've worked hard for all of this, all my life. It's still mine and I love it. I don't want to give up anything."

Coldly, Barbara disengaged her wrist. "You must stop exciting yourself. You must rest." Crossing the room silently, she drew the drapes. "Good night, dear."

She felt she could breathe again upon leaving the old man's room. For the moment, she was free; the night nurse would be there to take care of him.

"Mr. Larson is waiting for you in the library, Mrs. Goss."

"Thank you."

The library was a huge, expensive, uncomfortable room, but Marshal Larson had managed to look comfortable sprawled in one of the black leather chairs. Barbara came in, locking the door behind her.

"I'm not sure you ought to be here now," she said.

"How is he today?"

"The same," she said. "He's dying."

"Why does he have to take so long about it?"

"Now you can see why it had to be done my way. I wanted to marry you and now I can, and besides that we have the Goss Restaurant chain and seven million dollars."

"Sometimes I think I should be scared of you."

"You don't act afraid," laughed Barbara, but he didn't answer, being busy with the fastenings at the back of her dress.

Barbara, having just returned from an afternoon of shopping, had barely put down her packages when the day nurse came in.

"I have some bad news for you, Mrs. Goss. Your husband has just died."

Barbara hoped the surge of triumph didn't show outwardly. She forced a gasp of surprise from her lips and pretended to collapse into a chair.

"I don't believe he felt much pain," said the nurse, "but just at the last he seemed—so—angry."

"I'm glad he's—at peace now," said Barbara. She went slowly up the stairs to his room, really crying, but as a form of relief that the waiting was over. He looked very still and small in the large gray bed, but she had gotten used to this. The nurse had covered his face. "Your days of grasping for the things you want are gone, old man. You'll never know how I hated your ugly hands on me and the way you used me as if I were just another convenience that your money entitled you to. But you knew I'd married you only for the money, and you didn't even care. Now all those things you spent your life getting are mine."

The funeral was extravagant with mounds of flowers that drowned the senses in color and scent. Goss looked shrunken and out-of-place in the gray box lined in white silk. The great ruddy strength of him had gone somewhere else, leaving this corn-husk doll in its place. Somewhere, that strength waited—Barbara pulled her thoughts up short. They were crazy thoughts, and anyway, they were closing the lid and she was rid of him for good. She stood and watched as they lowered the box down into the ground, and she left him there in his roomy cemetary plot on the side of a gentle hill. It was the last plot of ground he would own.

Barbara spent the night of the funeral with Marsh. She was almost insanely happy at the way things had turned out. But early the next morning the telephone rang. Still sleepy, she managed to recognize the voice of Thomas Blaine, Goss' business manager.

"I called to tell you about some bad luck we had here last night," he said. "Our Chicago restaurant blew up."

"How'd that happen?"

"Nobody knows for sure. There wasn't much left of the place, but the insurance boys are investigating. I'm sure everything'll be all right. I'll call you again later."

"All right. Thanks for calling."

"What was that about?" Marsh asked.

"Oh, nothing important, I guess. One of the restaurants was accidentally blown up last night."

"Probably a gas leak or something."

"Probably."

Two restaurants blew up, then three. Feeling that more investigation was needed, Barbara talked to the police, then hired detectives of her own. No news came in. Another restaurant exploded, and she began to feel helpless in the face of some force stronger than she could imagine.

As if she hadn't trouble enough, she got a call from the Director of the Crestacre Cemetary.

"We've been having a little trouble out here," he said. "There've been minor earthquakes in the region of your husband's plot."

"Earthquakes, are you sure—"

"We can think of no other explanation. You see, the ground beneath your husband's grave has started to rise. The small hill where he rested has grown quite large within the past month."

"My husband's grave?"

"I'm sure everything will be all right. We'll do everything we can."

"Yes, thank you very much."

Barbara called up Marsh and asked him to take her to the cemetary. He was surprised, but as usual, didn't refuse. "I wish you'd tell me what this is all about," he said as they walked down one of the cemetary's white gravled paths.

Barbara didn't want to explain, so she said nothing. When they reached the plot, everything was apparent anyway. The hill had grown impossibly large, but the grave was still at the top. The instability of the ground had made the headstone topple over.

"Well, it looks as if the old boy is not exactly resting in peace," joked Marsh, but the look on Barbara's face stopped his laughter.

"Four restaurants are bound to take up quite a bit of space."

"Say, I knew coming out here was wrong," said Marsh. "You're getting morbid about this."

The sun was going down, and the cool evening wind slipped over her like the caresses of gentle hands. She shivered. What if those hands grasped suddenly, feeling cold and slimy, pulling at her—"

"I've got to go home now."

"Sure."

"You won't leave me alone tonight, will you?"

"Of course not. Come on. You look as if you could use a drink and I know I need one."

In the middle of the night Barbara awoke. It had been a beautiful moonlit night, but now the room was so dark she couldn't even see the outlines of furniture. She couldn't remember drawing the drapes, but she knew she must have. She squirmed restlessly and felt the cool slickness of silk—silk? White ... silk. And the body lying next to her, was it Marsh? Tentatively, she reached up; her hand struck something unyielding above; there wasn't any air; she was stifling, and the smell—

"Barbara!"

She kept on screaming.

Someone hit her. She opened her tightly shut eyes and saw morning. She took a deep breath of fresh air.

"You were only having a nightmare," said Marsh.

"I'm all right now. Thanks for waking me." She rose restlessly from the bed. "I don't think I could sleep any more."

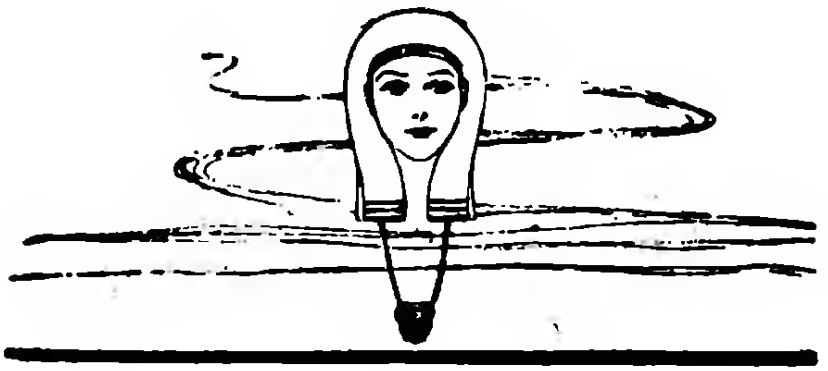
Barbara married Marsh on the day the last restaurant disappeared. She was a haggard-looking bride who was always looking around as if fearing the attack of some unknown enemy. Marsh, telling her that she had to get away from familiar

surroundings, had suggested Miami for their honeymoon, and they had boarded a plane that evening.

"I worry about you, Honey," said Marsh. "You've got to stop thinking about the old man. I should never have let you go through with your crazy plan. It must have been hell living with him, waiting for him to die."

"It wasn't that I minded living with him," said Barbara with a smile that made her face look like a chalky mask. "It's dying with him that I don't like. He was stronger than I thought. He was able to take it with him, after all."

For one moment the airliner was there, a cross of dark-silver-blue against the blue-violet of the night sky, and the next moment it had become a gigantic ball of bright orange flame. The land below received a rain of smoking metal fragments and charred bodies of what had been people. One of the bodies was never found.



THE MOON DIAL

by Henry S. Whitehead

(author of *The Black Beast, Cassius)*

The Rev. HENRY S. WHITEHEAD (1882-1932) was among the most popular of the oldtime *WEIRD TALES* authors, and was highly regarded by H. P. Lovecraft and various others of the most literate contributors to that frustrating but rewarding publication, wherein the editorial standards were so broad that the most gruesome trash might appear in the same issue as a masterpiece of weird literature – and not because the editor couldn't tell the difference! I must confess that, at the time I started reading WT, the Whitehead stories I saw before his untimely death in 1932 seemed somewhat tame to me; nonetheless, I enjoyed them.

And other editors appreciated Whitehead, too. For although the Harry Bates *STRANGE TALES* centered more upon fast action than slow build-up of horror, terror, etc., this canny editor recognized Whitehead's solid merit, as is shown by the fact that HSW appeared in six of the magazine's seven issues. The bulk of Whitehead's stories are laid in the West Indies or are narrated by Mr. Gerald Canevin, but the present tale is entirely different. It does not appear in either of the two Arkham House collections, *Jumbee and Other Uncanny Tales* (out of print) or *West India Lights,* and to the best of my knowledge and belief has never been reprinted since its original appearance in 1931.

SAID YUSSUF, THE YOUNG SON of the Maharajah of Kangalore, a hill-state in the north of India, looked down through the white moonlight one stifling night in July upon the moon-dial where it stood clear of the encompassing cypresses in that portion of the palace gardens which lay immediately under

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his window. Said Yussuf never retired without looking down at the spot where its shimmering paleness caused it to stand out clearly even on nights when only the starlight illuminated that space in the closely-shrubbed gardens.

During the day the moon-dial was only a queer, somewhat battered antique, brought from nobody knew where in the reign of the old Maharajah, Said's grandfather, who had remodeled the gardens. But it was Said himself who had named it the moon-dial. He had got that phrase from one of the works of the English writer, George DuMaurier, which his father, who had been educated at Oxford and married an English wife, had placed in the palace library. Said's tutor did not always approve of his private reading, but then Mr. Hampton did not know just what that included. During summers, the tutor always went home to England on his three months' vacation, and then Said took refuge in the great library and read to his heart's content of Kipling, Dumas, Gustave Flaubert, and the English Bible. Said, instructed for reasons of state twice a week in the Koran by the Chief Mullah of Kangalore, found the heroic tales of the Old Testament and the incidents in the life of Jesus-ben-Yssuf singularly attractive by comparison with the dry works of Mohammed, the Prophet.

Said had gone up to his quarters this evening, a very hot night, as usual, at about nine-thirty. Now, an hour later, he was lying on his stomach along the broad window seat of his turreted apartment, arrayed only in a pair of European boy's shorts, which were cooler than the orthodox pajamas these stifling nights. It was, despite the heavy heat, a really glorious night, gorgeous with the full moon, though no breath of air stirred the leaf of a single shrub or tree.

The face of the moon-dial, like very old silver, or nickel, was overscored with curious, cryptic markings which, in daylight, Said was never weary of examining. This face—for the thing was movable—he had turned very slightly, late that afternoon, towards the west; he could not have said why he had done that. It was instinct, a vague affair like that other instinct which told him surely, because of many generations of ancestors who had

believed in reincarnation, that he had lived before, many, many times!

Now, there in the window, he looked down at the moon-dial, with no thought of sleep in his mind.

A French clock, somewhere, chimed eleven. A delicate, refreshing breeze, hardly more than a breath, shifted the light silk curtains. Said closed his eyes with the comfort of it, and the little breeze fanned his back, pleasurably, like the touch of soft fingers.

When he opened his eyes and looked back again at his moon-dial, he suddenly roused himself to full wakefulness and abruptly pushed his chin higher on his cupped hands. He gazed now with all his interest concentrated.

The dial seemed to be glowing, in a fashion he had never previously observed. A thin lambent, eerie flicker of light played over its ancient surface, moving oddly. Watching closely he saw the light take on something like form; a definite movement. Slanting rays seemed to flow down from some point above; and now, as he watched them gravely, they came down with greater and greater rapidity: The rays glowed like roses; they fell like a thin rain striking silently and appearing to rebound from the dial's surface.

Fascinated, Said rose to his knees and leaned far out of the window in the pure, warm night air, drinking in this strange spectacle. He was not in the least disturbed by its unusualness. All this seemed to him a recurrence of something—the fulfilment of one of those vague, gossamer-like yearnings of his, which were wholly natural to him, but, which so seldom met their realization in this life! It seemed not unnatural that rose-colored rays should pour down—they seemed literally to pour now—and break into veritable cascades there at the moon-dial . . .

HE HAD ALWAYS, SOMEHOW, felt within himself some strange, subtle affinity with the moon. He had said nothing of this. It was not the sort of thing one could discuss with Mr. Hampton or even with his parents. Others than himself, he realized, would consider such an idea highly absurd.

Moonlight, and more especially the moon at her full, had always attracted his attention since his earliest recollection. Innumerable times he had watched it, cold and frosty on winter nights, pale and straw-colored in the spring, huge, orange, warmly luminous in late summer and autumn. It was orange-colored now, enormous, baffingly exotic.

Great sheets of light seemed now to fall and shatter themselves upon the dial; light, orange and tenuous like the great rolling orb itself; light, alluring, somehow welcoming . . .

A great longing suddenly invaded Said's mind. He wanted to go down there and stand in that light; reach his arms up into it and let it bathe him. He stirred uneasily. He had, many times, dreamed of floating down to the lawns from his window, levitated, supported by mysterious, invisible arms! Now the longing became an almost unbearable nostalgia, a veritable yearning. The light, where it had broken and splashed off the face of the dial was dancing luminously, softly, through the shadows of the great encircling cypress trees. It seemed to gather itself together; to roll along the ground. He shut his eyes again and buried his face in his hands.

When he looked back, for he could not for very long keep his eyes away from this spectacle, the light was hurling itself down in shafts and blocks and streams upon the dial-face, with a certain rhythm. The stream was more solid now, more continuous. It broke into whorls and sparkling, dim roulades, and swept earthward, as though redistilled from the magical alchemy of the mysterious ancient dial-face; it seemed to Said that it was circling, tenuously, and yet with a promise of continuity, of increasing power, about the dial's stone standard.

The light stream was interrupted now and again by blank spaces, blocks of black darkness; and looking for these and watching them descend like lacunae in the orange stream, he imagined them to be living creatures and half expected to see them take firmer form and dance there, weaving through and through the flickering maze of whorls.

He wanted to float down there, and the longing made a lump in his throat.

He rose, silently opened his bedroom door, and listened. He could hear his father's quiet breathing, through the open door of a bedroom across the hallway. His mother slept farther down the hall away from the great winding, pillared stairway which led below.

Silently he walked to the stairhead, turned, and went down.

He emerged on the lawn a few seconds later. He had only to unfasten a summer screen-door and cross a broad veranda. Then he was across the gravel of the drive and on the velvety lawn, and running towards the moon-dial, a little white figure in white drill shorts, his dark hair glowing in the pouring moonlight.

He paused before pressing through the coppice of cypresses. There was no sound in the open space about the dial, but his instinct for the affairs of the moon warned him that something altogether new and strange was going on out there. He felt no fear, but knew that all this was a repetition of something, some vast and consuming happiness which somewhere somehow, he had known before; though certainly not in his conscious recollection. It was—this feeling about something very, very old, and very lovely—no more than a recurrence or a repetition of something strange and wild and sweet which had gone before; something mellowed and beautiful because of a vast, incomprehensible antiquity.

He walked forward now, very quietly; and, for a reason which he could not explain even to himself but which he knew to be a right instinct, he proceeded, holding himself very erect, through the cypresses and out into the orange stream.

He knew even before he glanced down at them that a great black panther lay crouched, immobile, on either side of him; crystallized in the magic of the moon out of two of those black void-like things, transmuted by the power of the dial into actuality. Lightly he placed a palm on the head of each of the great ebony beasts, and the velvety touch of their fur reassured him.

About the dial softly-moving figures, erect and graceful, moved statelily, with a vast gravity. Within the circle about the dial the flat moonlight lay like a pool of oil. Tall white lilies

stood about its perimeter, their calices open to the moon. Their fragrance came to him in recurrent waves, and dimly he heard the music of lutes and the delicate rattle of systra, the soft, musical clanging of cymbals, and a chorus of faint singing, a chant in rhythm to the beat of clanging salsalim. He heard the word *Tanit* repeated again and again, and he found himself saying it.

A cloud sailed majestically across the moon. A delicate sadness tinged the warm night. The lily scent grew faint. The cymbals slowed and dulled.

He felt the great beasts rise beside him. Their fur caressed his hands as they moved forward, gravely, majestically. A hand on each, he walked forward with them, towards his moon-dial. He looked down upon its face and at the faint outlines of mystical figures.

Then he knew a great happiness. It seemed to him that these ancient symbols, which had always concealed their inner meaning from him, were now plain. He was sure now that he had lived before, many times . . .

The cloud passed, and now the figures on the dial-face were once more merely dim old markings. The statuesque black panthers were gone; there were no longer any dancing figures. A little breeze moved the leaves of the deodars.

He looked up, straight into the face of the moon, instinctively opening his arms wide towards that vast, far serenity. He passed a hand gently over the smooth, worn surface of the ancient dial. Then he walked back to the palace and up to his sleeping-quarters. He felt sleepy now. He got into his bed, drew in his breath in a long sigh of contentment, and fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

His beautiful mother was standing beside his bed when he awakened. It was broad day. She bent over him, and he smiled up into her face as she kissed him.

The Maharanee of Kangalore was a fanciful person. "Your hair smells of lilies," she said.

SAID COULD HARDLY WAIT for the next night of the full moon. His sure instinct for lunar affairs told him plainly that

only at the full would the moon come into conjunction with the dial.

But the experience—if it had been a real experience; sometimes, as he thought of it, he could hardly tell—lay, clear-cut, like one of the cameos in the palace treasure-room, in his alert mind. He thought over, meantime, every occurrence, all the sequences of his adventure in the gardens. He put together all its arabesque details. They crystallized into the certainty that he had been living over again something which he had known before; something very important, very dear to him. He counted off the days and nights until the next possible time . . .

It came on an August night of balm and spice following light rains; a night on which the tuberose and jasmine of the gardens were pouring out an ecstasy of fragrance.

Said had been in the palace treasury that afternoon, with old Mohammed Ali the Guardian, and his mind was full of the beauty of that priceless collection which had come down through countless generations: precious and semi-precious jewels; ornaments—armlets, elephant-ankuses, sword-hilts, jeweled post-tops for palanquins; innumerable affairs, including a vast number of ancient and comparatively modern weapons, weapons of every conceivable variety, which had served for many, many generations the fighting men of his house. He had poured rubies, the ransom of an empire, through his two hands that day; worn Saracenic helmets of light steel, swept through the air with a whistling sound the curved, jewel-encrusted scimitars of his ancestors. Now, from the windowseat, the moon-dial shimmered vaguely among the cypresses. His mind was full of vague, alluring expectations; his body trembled with the anticipation of something dimly recalled, tantalizingly envisaged, now apparently imminent . .

He went down the stairs and out upon the lawn towards the moon-dial. He wanted to be there, this time, as soon as the lightstream should begin its strange downpouring. He was sure that it would come. He touched lovingly the ancient, scarred face of the dial runed with its cryptic markings. He had, for one brief, exulting moment, he remembered clearly, thought that he

understood those markings twenty-eight evenings ago. But, the next day, when he had gone to the dial after eight hours' healthful sleep in between his extraordinary experience and the fresh light of a glorious summer morning, he had discovered that they were once more merely strange marks. The disillusion had saddened him. Things, in life, so often seemed like that! One imagined that success was in hand, and in the morning the gold had turned to ashes.

His mood tonight was one of quivering anticipation. Thrills of an expected gladness shook him, standing there beside his dial, his face turned to the sky where the August moon proudly dominated the heavens.

Abruptly the downpouring enveloped him as he waited there in an ecstasy of wild, unearthly glory.

He felt himself drowned, engulfed, in this utter gorgeousness of feeling which seemed to melt him, body and soul; to carry him willingly, his arms outspread to receive it, up into itself. He felt himself suffused, as he yielded to it; something like a potent fluid invaded him, drenched his utter inner consciousness, satisfied his happy heart . . .

HE OPENED HIS EYES, closed automatically at the sudden access of the moon's pouring power. He beheld a vast, glorious configuration, splendid, gorgeous, illuminated; growing clearer, more detailed, more utterly satisfying, like the center of all places, the consummation of all desires, the goal of all vague and beautiful thoughts. He felt, somehow, safe, with a wellbeing transcending all experiences; a feeling that at long last he was arriving where he had always belonged; coming swiftly, inerrantly, to the very center and source where he had, fleetingly, in occasional happy glimpses of the mind, always wanted to be; always known that he must and should be.

He stood upon a soft meadow of pale, bright grass, in the midst of a light scent of lilies, outside the slowly opening doors of a lofty temple, which towered up into the heavens and seemed to mingle its pinnacles with the nearby, friendly stars.

Now the great doors stood wide open. He walked towards

them. The sense of old knowledge, of what he must do once he came within the temple, was in his mind. He slowed his pace to a formal dignified tread. He passed through the doors of the temple and stood within.

And, before he could turn his head to look about in this vastness, into his very soul penetrated the message: "Sleep! Tanit commands."

Beside him he observed a porphyry couch, its finials glowing with complicated whorls and insets of some faintly shining metal like platinum. Upon this, without question, his mind and heart at peace, he reclined, and closed his eyes.

A sweeping, distant, heavenly-sweet breath of music, the music of viols and systra, swept his mind. He slept . . .

* * * * *

HE STRODE, A TALL, COMMANDING FIGURE, through the narrow streets of the great city where he had lived and worked for many years, the city of London. Above, a waxing moon poured down her gracious light through a black and drifting mass of storm-clouds.

It was chilly and damp, and he had drawn about himself his heavy black outdoor cloak of rich dark cloth. He picked his steps through the filth and mud of the street, while just ahead of him a man-servant bore aloft a flaming cresset-torch to light the uneven way.

He proceeded onward, moved by a strong purpose. This, towards which on this uninviting night he hastened, was no ordinary appointment. What few wayfarers were abroad seemed animated by a great and consuming dread. These glanced furtively at him and at each other as they slunk along, giving each other wide berths. And, in the hand of each, a small, sponge-like object, saturated with reeking vinegar, was held before the face.

At last the two stood before the portals of a magnificent building. The servant knocked. Two men-at-arms, gorgeous in the royal livery, recognizing him, had saluted and allowed him to pass.

The doors, in answer to the servant's knock, now swung open.

A gentleman, splendid in embroidered silks, came forward and bowed. He returned this salutation.

"A dismal night to be thus abroad, My Lord Burlinghame," he remarked, and the gentleman smiled and nodded.

"The King awaits you—anxiously," said the gentleman, and turned and led the way.

He stood now, before the King, in a small, richly-furnished apartment, its walls thick with Spanish arras.

"Come," said the King eagerly, "sit, most worthy Doctor Campalunis, and relate to me the result of your labors."

He delayed seating himself until the King himself had resumed his seat. He spoke directly, pointedly.

"I know now the cause, Sire, beyond any doubt or peradventure. A surprising conclusion, upon which the astrological art and actual experiment converge to show its actuality! To state the matter pithily it cometh down to this: It is the superabundance of rats in this your realm of England that causeth the plague!"

The King started, half smiled; grew suddenly serious again, looked mystified, swore roundly a rolling oath.

"By the twenty-four nostrils of the Twelve Apostles! Good Doctor Campalunis, were it not thyself 'twould sound like a scurvy jest!"

He nodded, and smiling slowly, answered the King.

"It was in sooth a sorry task; one which, I doubt me, few physicians would have descended to! Yet did I demonstrate its accuracy; the 'calculation' was based upon the conjunction of our lady, the moon, with the planet Venus. And—it pointed to the rats!

"Then did I take three rats, and from them—oh, sorry task!—did remove, with these hands, their parasites. These did I transfer to three small beasts of various kinds, a hare, a stoat, and a mewing cat! Proof, Sire! Within twelve hours, upon all three—as the rat-fleas penetrated to their blood—did there appear tumors like to those upon the folk in this calamity we name 'The Plague' and which now devastates the realm. Soon thereafter all were

dead, each after his nature: the hare without resistance; the stoat fighting; the cat, as though she would never pass—nine lives she hath, according to the ancient saying!

"Experiment thus doth prove the wisdom of our lady, the moon. I counsel thee, then, that all rats be hunted and destroyed, that the plague stay itself and England be not thrice-decimated."

He was driving back in a great rumbling coach. Beside him, on the silken-cushioned seat, lay the great red silk purse of gold presented to him by the King—the King who, trusting him, had, before his departure, summoned Giles Talbot, his scrivener, and was even now preparing a royal proclamation directing, upon pain of the King's displeasure, all burgesses, shrieves, coroners and mayors to cause the folk to find and destroy the swarming rats and so end the plague . . .

He glanced out through the coach window upon the hastening figures of occasional wayfarers; and, ever and again, cressets lighting the gloomy scene disclosed bearers carrying the victims of the plague, hastily and furtively through the muddy streets to the charnelhouse . . .

Above, the moon, now clear of clouds, looked serenely down upon this theater of death and destruction, where ruthless King Plague had well-nigh replaced the reign of kindly King Charles.

* * * * *

CARRYING A SMALL HEAVY package, he stepped briskly along a sunny roadway towards a goldsmith's shop. He stepped within and the apprentices raised their heads. Welcoming smiles, murmurs of pleased greeting met him; and then rapid questions in the soft Italian argot.

"What, the masterpiece? Finished at last!"

"Ecco, Ascanio, *fratello.* It is done, eh?"

"The Master will be pleased."

"Per Baccho! A purse that it is magnificent!"

He placed his burden upon the central table. The others were all crowding about him now eager to see.

"Touch it not, colt of a jackass!"

"Room for our Ascanio, the new Cellini!"

"Run—fly, Beppo! Fetch the Master."

He left the inmost wrapping, of silk, where it was, closely draped about the figurine. It stood, shapeless under the unrevealing drapery, about nine inches in height. The apprentices hopped in their anxiety to see it.

Beppo dashed back into the workroom, the Master following. All stood aside as the tall figure, dressed in plum-colored silk like a nobleman, came hurriedly into the room. The bearded face lighted.

"Ascanio! The Virgin—not finished—tell me not—"

"Finished, I believe, to the limit of my poor skill, Messer Benvenuto," he said, and gravely removed the silk wrapping.

There arose a chorus of shouts, squeals, hand-clappings, murmurs, small mutterings and sighs from the apprentices; then, this dying down, he looked at the Master. The others, too, were looking at him. His was the ultimate decision, the last opinion of the workroom, of the city of Florence, of the great world. The master goldsmith stood, motionless, silent, frowning slightly, before the figurine.

It was of red gold, the Virgin Mother of God, chaste, beautiful, cunningly wrought; glowing now in the freshness of the new metal; gleaming, exquisite.

The Master took it into his hands. He held it off, squinted at it; held it close, gazing intently, silently. He laid it down, reached into a pouch, brought out a magnifying glass, sat down on the stool Beppo had placed for him. The apprentices dared barely to breathe.

Messer Benvenuto laid it down at last. He returned, without a word, the glass to his pouch. He turned about and looked at his visitor.

Then abruptly, suddenly, he held out both sensitive hands. "A masterpiece!" he pronounced, and rose from the stool.

"And this—" he indicated the base of the statue, "no goldsmith hath so done before, Ascanio. Inspiration! Thou hast gone far—to the end of our art. The moon—as a pedestal for the

Mother of God! It smacks of the perfection of art. I hail thee, Ascanio—Master!"

* * * * *

IT WAS VERY EARLY DAWN, a fresh, cool, sea-dampened dawn, just breaking to a delightful smell of dew-wet heather. He paced up and down on the rough stone flagging. He paused, looked about.

Over towards the east the sun, glorious, burst over the horizon. He had been watching for it from the wall's top, over the gate, and now in its new illumination he gazed out frowningly, beneath the pressure of the great bronze helmet; over the gray and brown gorse hummocks and undulating prairie of rough furze, into the north. There, always concealed, always ready to strike, signaling with their fires to each other, chieftain to chieftain, lay the Picts. Against these this ultimate fortification had been built.

Behind him, to the south, under the wall a great din arose, a noise compounded of the disassembling of *ballistae*, much hammering and wrenching as the heavy timbers were taken apart; metallic clangings as the breastplates and *scuta* were stacked, in tens, a mule-load each; shouts, commands; the ringing, brief blast of a bugle.

The relief, marching briskly, the never-changing quick step of Rome's invincible legions, came now to a last routine duty. He raised to his lips a small golden whistle, fastened about his neck with a leathern thong. His men came in from east and west. He saluted the approaching centurion. The guard above the gate was changed mechanically, the two officers exchanged brief greetings. His own veteran century behind him, he marched off duty; descended towards the gate at the south side.

A vast bustle greeted him. The troops were preparing for their final evacuation of the wall. All about him this clang of weapons being packed rose to heaven.

He was being saluted. He stopped, listened to the message. He

was to go to the Emperor, at once. He acknowledged the orders, dismissed the messenger, turned to the west.

"As thou knowest, oh, Gaius, the barbarian hordes press back our legions. By sheer force of their incredible numbers, they have worn down the defences of the north. They slip through. Rome herself calls, at long last. For Rome's defence we must go.

"But, oh valiant one, these legions must go safely. It were to serve Rome ill to lose a single quaternion against these Picts. Take thou of thy men, and stay behind, then, here upon the wall. If, at the expiry of two days, thou are yet alive, then follow the legions. Yet, by all the guile and all the skill and all the love of Rome thou dost possess, hold the gate against the north until we are away. I leave thee to the bravest task of all, oh, Gaius!" . . .

With his six legionaries, he strode up and down above the gate, watching the north. For a day and a half the three legions had been marching, ever southward, towards their embarkation-points, through the fair and glorious country of Brittania which the wall had made possible; fifteen thousand seasoned veterans, returning to hold off, if might be, for another decade perhaps, the swarming barbarians who were pressing down upon the Mediterranean world.

For the first six hours nothing had taken place upon the Picts' side of the wall; only the increase of signal fires. Then had come the slow gathering of this barbarian horde. Now, on the evening of the second day, as he looked down, despite the threatenings of his sweating legionaries, with their rocks, their small catapults, and now—as a last resort—the dreaded firepots, he saw the Picts gathered in their thousands. A dank smell rose from these barbarians; a smell compounded of the sweat of laboring naked bodies, of furze smoke, of the skins of wolves from which they fashioned their scant garments.

Already the gate was down; already, in their hundreds, the Picts swarmed down below there on the south side of the wall, the Roman side. Convinced now that the garrison had departed, that these on the wall's top were merely a scant guard remaining for the purpose of fooling them, of holding off their own

inevitable attack, the leaders of the Picts were haranguing them to the massed attack up the ramps to the wall's top.

Abruptly the moon rose over the western horizon. And with its rising a message, authoritative, definite, filled his mind:

"Well done, and bravely, valiant one, friend of Tanit! And now I take thee unto myself, ere thou perish in the body."

He struggled mentally to reply, as he looked at his hard-bitten, middle-aged men, old legionaries who had remained; who were giving all for *Roma Mater.* They stood now, massed together, just within the barrier which blocked off the ramp's top, their shields interlaced, their spears in a precise row behind them, their short blunt swords in their right hands; silent, ready for their last stand. As he looked at these faithful men his heart went out to them. Their devotion, their iron discipline had never once wavered.

"Nay," he answered. *"Nay,* Lady Diana, grace of all the *Dii Romae,* I go not willingly, but purpose rather to stand here with these!"

He stepped towards them, his own, somewhat heavier, sword ready in his hand, his shield affixed to his left arm. The roar of the mounting Picts came bellowingly through to them now as the horde swarmed up the ramp. Now the barrier was down, crumpled before the irresistible urge of numbers. Now the short swords were in play, taking terrible toll, like flails, like machines.

Then all that space was abruptly illuminated, as a huge ball of what seemed to the stricken Picts pure incandescent fire smote the stone flooring of the great wall's top, burst into a myriad fragments of light, gathered itself together, then went out into a sudden blackness; and through this blackness the figure of their centurion showed itself to his legionaries like Mars Invictus; head up, sword raised on high, and then, as abruptly, vanished.

The Picts had disappeared. The legionaries looked at each other blankly. One, Tertullius, looked over the edge.

"All run through the gateways into their territory," he reported to his companions.

"And Gaius?" one asked. "What of our centurion?"

"It is the high Gods! He hath gone to Odin!"

"The light swallowed him up. Hail, O mighty Mithras!"

"He is gone from among us, O invincible gods of Rome!"

"He was godlike. His was the kindness of Chrestus!"

"Olympus receives him, doubtless, O Venus Victrix! A great marvel, this!"

Within a few minutes six hardbitten veteran legionaries were at the double on the trail of the main army, going straight south, pausing not over the various and sundry abandoned arms and supplies, jetsam left strewed along that way of retreat.

And upon the unanimity of their report and the surprise which their arrival, without their officer, had caused in the ranks of Maxentius' legions, within the year a shrine to Gaius, who had been taken up by the old gods of *Roma Mater,* was rising in the little hills above Callericum, which had been the Centurion Gaius' native village.

* * * * *

HE ROSE TO HIS FEET, stiff from that long reclining, and stretched himself. It was night, a night of warm and mellow airs playing about the olive trees under the full-moon of the early Palestinian spring. He gazed, grave-eyed, towards that sinister hilltop where three Roman crosses stood athwart the moon's light, dark and sinister shadows of death and desolation. He looked long at them, stooped, and adjusted a loose sandal-thong; rose again, and turning, began to walk towards the city, beautiful upon its own hill of Zion, the temple pinnacles white and glorious in the pouring moonlight.

But on an olive-bordered slope he paused and looked steadfastedly up into the calm moon's face. There seemed to him to be, struggling towards clear understanding, some message for him in what he had seen that day, the marvels he had witnessed, he, a Greek of Corinth, sojourning in Jerusalem with the caravan of his uncle Themistocles the merchant. The moon had always been his friend, since earliest infancy. Now, aged twenty, he felt always an inspiration, a kind of renewed vigor, when she was at full.

She was at full now, and he remembered that these

Palestinians based one of their religious observances upon the lunar cycle. It was now begun. The middle-aged man next to him had explained the ritual to him just before sunset, when those bodies had been taken down from the crosses.

It had been a harrowing experience. These Romans were a ruthless lot, "conquerors of the world," indeed. Greece lay beneath their heel. This Palestinian country, too, was a mere procuratorship, however; not a province like his own Hellas. This execution—he had heard of that method, though he had never witnessed it before—had, however, seemed to meet the approval of the Palestinians.

The "message" troubled him. Something was pressing through to his consciousness. A duty was being thrust upon him. That, of course, had happened before, in much the same way—warnings, admonitions, growing in his mind. He had always followed them, for, indeed, they had been unmistakable things, matters germane to his inmost thoughts, parts of his own consciousness. What would it be this time? He opened his mind, looking up at that bright, mysterious disk, which, as Aristotle, or was it old Zeno?—he could not remember precisely; he was a merchant, not a philosopher—had taught, regulated the waters of the universe; the tides. An odd conception that! True, doubtless. Something caused the ceaseless ebbings and flowings of his own blue Aegean, of the *Mare Internum* as the Romans named the great sea about which their vast empire now centered itself.

The "message" had to do with finding someone. He lay down upon the warm grass as yet unaffected by any distillation of morning dew.

"Search—search—here in this city of Jerusalem, for one named—"

The name eluded him. He moved his feet, impatiently. There were ants here. One had crawled upon the side of his right foot. He moved the foot, and it encountered a small obstacle. He sat up, rolled over, reached down. It was a stone, a small, round pebble—*petros*.

Then the "message" came clear like the emergence of Pallas Athene full-armed and cinctured from the mighty head of Zeus!

"Search! Find—Petros!"

It burned in his brain. He sat there, cogitating it. One named Peter he was to find, here in this city of Jerusalem. He nodded his head in acquiescence. A rich energy suffused him as he looked up once more into the moon's quiet face.

He rose, lightly, drew in a deep, refreshing breath laden with the sweet dry scent of myrtle, then he walked down the hill towards Jerusalem, in search of someone named Peter.

* * * * *

THE FAINT MEMORY OF an evil dream contended with a fetid odor which drifted in through the methodical row of star-shaped windows opposite his polished wooden couch with the henna-stained horsetails at its curved foot. The dream, an unpleasant, vague memory now, faded from his waking consciousness, encompassed by that smell. That would be from the *ergastulum,* the slave-compound of the suffete, Hanno, whose somewhat more pretentious palace towered over his own on the upper slope of the hill. Hanno, now in the field against the revolting mercenaries, was badly served at home. He must send a peremptory message to the keeper of the *ergastulum!* This was intolerable. He rose to a sitting posture, throwing off the linen coverlet with its embroidered horses and stars thickly sewn upon it, and looked down his long body.

There were unmistakable evidences of emaciation, loss of weight. No wonder, with the scarcity of food now prevalent in Carthage. He rose and clapped his hands together.

Through a curtain entered instantly a huge Nubian, Conno, the bath-slave. Conno's soot-black arms were full of the materials for the bath; a red box of polished enamel containing the fuller's powder, large squares of soft linen, several strigils, a cruse of rose-colored oil.

He followed the slave to a far corner of the lofty room, five stories above the roadway below, sweating now, like Conno

himself. The early morning heat poured in dryly through the many windows. He cast himself down on a narrow couch of polished marble, and Conno poured a thin stream of the hot water from a small amphora along his back, spreading it about with the palms of his muscular, yet soft hands. Conno was a very skillful bath-slave. He was dumb, too, which, despite the deprecated savagery of a former owner who had had his tongue removed to gain this desirable end, was, somehow, an advantage on a hot and blistering morning like this!

Conno sifted reddish-brown powder onto his back, working it with the water into a paste.

When the paste was set he rolled over and Conno repeated his ministrations. Then he stood up, and the slave rubbed the thin paste into his muscular arms, down his thighs, about his neck, delicately on the smooth portions of his face where his beard did not grow.

After this preliminary kneading, Conno thinned the paste with more hot water, and began to use the strigils. Then Conno skilfully rinsed him from head to foot, the red-stained water running down into an opening in the floor whence a pipe led it away.

Conno kneaded his muscles with oil, and, at last, gathered his paraphernalia together and walked out of the room.

He returned to the part of the room where his bed stood. Here, awaiting him, stood a slender, dark Numidian, a young girl, who deftly dressed his hair, pomading it with great skill.

Two more slaves entered with the garments of the day. They were green, a cool color which he liked to wear. Dressed, he continued to sit, frowning thoughtfully. That dream! Thoughtfully he attempted to reconstruct it, to bring it back to his conscious mind.

In the process his eye lighted on an ornament on the stand beside him, a serpent carved cunningly in ebony, and polished to brilliance, a coiled serpent, its tail in its mouth—emblem of the endlessness of the universe, a symbol of Tanit, goddess of the moon, one of the city's ancient, traditional, tutelary divinities. She was somewhat neglected now in the stress of this famine,

result of the mercenary-troops' revolt which had been going on now for five months. Yes, there were even certain rumors that the college of priests which had served from time immemorial the temple of Tanit, was breaking up; these men, or half-men as he contemptuously thought of the white-robed hierophants, were slowly deserting the gentle Tanit for one or another of the severer deities, representing the male principles; *Baalim,* violent gods, requiring a more sanguinary ministry.

Tanit—the dream! A message, it had been: "Go to the northeast, to where the main aqueduct runs underneath the wall's top. Drive out from there—"

He rose and clapped his hands violently. He strode towards the doorway with its silk curtains wrought in flowers and stars and horses, emblems of the Carthaginian timocracy, and met the hurrying slave. "Swiftly, Bothon, my litter and a light spear!"

The slave ran. He stood, awaiting his return gazing pensively out of a window, open to the scorching African sunlight drenching the world of Carthage; up to that magnificent location, the finest in the city, where, near the hill's summit towered the vast palace of Hamilcar Barca, sea-suffete of the republic. If Barca would only return! No man knew where he was, save that with a few galleys he was at sea. Barca's return, if, indeed, he should return, must mean a turning-point in this campaign, so far ineffective, against the revolted troops, now compassing the city from the scorching, desert plain below; the campaign of the evil old suffete, Hanno, whose lifetime of debauchery had left him treacherous, ineffective, and leprous.

The slave announced the litter and handed him a light spear. He balanced it in his hand, thoughtfully, then descended to the entranceway. Here, again, the fetor of that slave-compound assaulted his nostrils. He laid the spear carefully lengthwise of the litter's edge and stepped within. He could feel its hardwood joints creak, even though they were oiled daily; even oil dried quickly in this drenching heat. He heard the muffled grunts of his four burly Nubians as they shouldered the litter. Then he was swaying lightly in the direction of the aqueduct . . .

He stepped out, looked about him. He was not sure what it

was he was to search for, even though the "message" had been peremptory. In the scorching sunlight, that here atop these smoothed stones the squaring and piling of which had consumed the lives of countless war-taken slaves a generation past, seemed almost unbearable, he walked along, slowly, contemplatively, now and again sounding with his spear's polished butt the hollow-sounding stones. Down below there lay the encampment of the mercenaries, their numbers augmented now by revolting desert tribesmen, arriving daily, a vast configuration, menacing, spreading, down there on the sand which danced in the heat-waves . . .

He slowed his pace, stepped softly, now, more slowly. Now he paused, a tall, slender figure, atop the aqueduct. He listened. Ahead there—a chipping rending sound. Someone was concealed below, tearing out stones! The precious water, the city's very life! One of the mercenaries, undoubtedly, who had worked his way in from the broad-mouthed vents, was doing it. As he stood there, listening, he remembered that he had himself warned the Council of that danger. If the water supply were diverted, destroyed, the city would perish! He lay down flat on his side, his ear against the smooth masonry, listening. Ah, yes—it was plain enough now, that chipping, grinding noise of breaking stonework . . .

He rose, ran lightly forward, on his toes, the spear poised delicately. He paused above a large square block of the hewn stone. He laid the spear down, placed both hands under the stone's outer edge, then, violently, skilfully, pulled it straight up. He let it fall against another flat stone, and reaching for the spear, thrust once, straight down through the aperture he had made.

A groan, a gasping sigh, then the soft impacts, growing rapidly fainter, as a body was borne down, knocking against the remoter stone angles and corners down inside the great aqueduct there under the wall's top; a body bobbing and bumping its way on a last brief journey, to the vents below.

Then turning to the west, where a faint moon rolled palely in

the blue, scorching African sky, he raised both arms straight towards it, a gesture of salutation, of adoration.

"To thee the praise, O Lady Tanit, tutelary of Carthage; to thee the praise, for this warning! Again, O effulgent one, hast thou saved the city; to thee all praise and thanks, adulation and attribution of power; to thee the adoration of the faithful; O perpetual bride, O glorious one, O effulgence, O precious one, O fountain of bounty . . ."

* * * * *

HE LEANED HEAVILY AGAINST the rounded edge of the wide war-chariot, three spears in his left hand, long and slender, fresh-ground from the day before by a cunning armorer of Gilgal. He had been wounded twice, both times by hurled darts, tearing his right thigh above the greave which encompassed the lower leg, and again in the top of the left shoulder; flesh-wounds both, yet throbbing, burning, painful.

The slaughter by those confederate Amorites had been heavy, and here on the plain of Beth-Horon, the fighting still progressed, even though the rapidly descending sun had, with its decline, brought no coolness. Great clouds of dust filled the hot, palpitating air. He raised his head, and gazed down towards Ajalon. Above the fringe of distant tall cedars which marked the valley's nearer edge, the moon sailed, pale and faint. To the west the sun was now sunken half-way over the horizon, blood-red, disappearing so rapidly now that he could follow it with his bloodshot, dust-smeared eyes.

The charioteer turned, his reins lying loosely over the sweat-caked backs of the horses and addressed him: "If but Jahveh would prolong the light, oh, My Lord Joshua!"

He raised his weary eyes to the west once more. The sun was now merely a rapidly descending tinge of brilliant carmine in the sullen sky. He spoke to his God: "Let the light as of day continue, O Thou of Sabaoth Who rulest the up-rising and the down-setting of Thy people. Stay, light of sun, that Jahveh's host

may see; and thou, too, O luminary of night, do thou, too, aid our host!"

A pink afterglow rose slowly from the west, spread far through the heavens, then, as though reluctantly, faded. The night fell rapidly, the manifold noises of the hand-to-hand conflicts grew fainter; the chariot-horses stirred as a faint breath blew up out of the tree-sheltered Valley of Ajalon. He turned to feel it on his face, and as he turned, a vast portent appeared to him.

For, from the moon, orange now, glowing enormously, there came first one single penetrating ray which seemed to reach down here to the plain of the House of Horon, and spread its radiance along the ground; and then others and others; until the great level plain was illuminated as brightly as though by the sun himself. A breeze swept up from the valley. The horses plucked up nervous heads, their cut manes bristling. The charioteer looked about at him inquiringly. He shifted the three spears into his other hand.

"On," he cried, "on, on—where the Sons of Amor press thickest! Drive, drive, like Nimrud of the Great Valley, like the Lion of The House of Judah roaring after his prey! Drive, that we may smite afresh the enemies of the Lord, God of Hosts . . ."

* * * * *

IT WAS WITH THESE MIGHTY WORDS in his mouth and the sense of battle in his brain that he stirred into consciousness on the porphyry couch. A roseate atmosphere filled the temple, as of approaching dawn, or some mellifluous afterglow; and to his nostrils, scorched with the smoke and dust of battle, was wafted the refreshing scent of lilies.

And into his mind drifted the gentle command: "Up, beloved of the Moon, up; arise, for Tanit comes."

He stood upright, waiting.

Then he heard a gentle voice, like a silver bell, and yet a voice of power; a voice before which he bent his head and covered his eyes.

"Hail, beloved of Tanit, giver of kindness, fountain of power, hail, and welcome here! Thou hast been permitted to see again thy existences; yet are these but a few, for thy encouragement, oh, well-be-loved. In those past lives thou hast never wavered in thy steadfastness. Carry then through all of this thy present life the certainty of power, and of my love and aid.

"Go now, beloved, and take with thee—this!"

The voice ceased, and he felt, upon his left arm, a gentle touch.

He opened his eyes, lowered his folded arms.

He stood upon the lawn, beside the moon-dial, under the moon. He gazed up at that gleaming serenity with a great, deep love in his heart. It seemed to him that he had just passed through some wondrous, now nearly-erased, experience; an experience of wonder and power. He felt tremendously happy, content, safe. He raised his arms impulsively. Something caught his eye; something that gleamed.

He completed his gesture, but his eyes were, despite themselves, drawn around to the wondrous thing sparkling upon his left arm, just above the elbow! It shimmered like the very diadem of Tanit. He brought his arm up close to his eyes, looked at the glimmering jeweled thing, an inch and a half wide, which encircled his upper arm. It was a bracelet encrusted with shining jewels; a bracelet of some metal that he had seen before, inset, somewhere; pale, beautiful metal, like platinum. He moved it, slightly, up and down his arm, with his other hand. It moved, freely, and when he tried to draw it past his elbow—for there seemed to be no clasp to it—it came freely, and off over his hand and into his other hand. He held it close to his face and peered at it lost in a maze of wonderment mingled with faint recollections of brave happenings; not quite clear, yet somehow sure and certain in his mind.

Then, carrying it, and looking lovingly up again at the moon, he turned, for he felt, suddenly, quite tired and sleepy; and walked back to the house through the cypresses, to the murmur of countless tiny whirrings and pipings of insects in the hedges.

He carried it into his bedroom and lighted the electric lamp on

his bureau, and looked at it in the artificial light, closely, admiringly. It reflected this strong light in millions of coruscations; green, yellow, burning red, pale blue, every shade of mauve and lavender and deeper purple, all the manifold shades and variations of the gamut of colors.

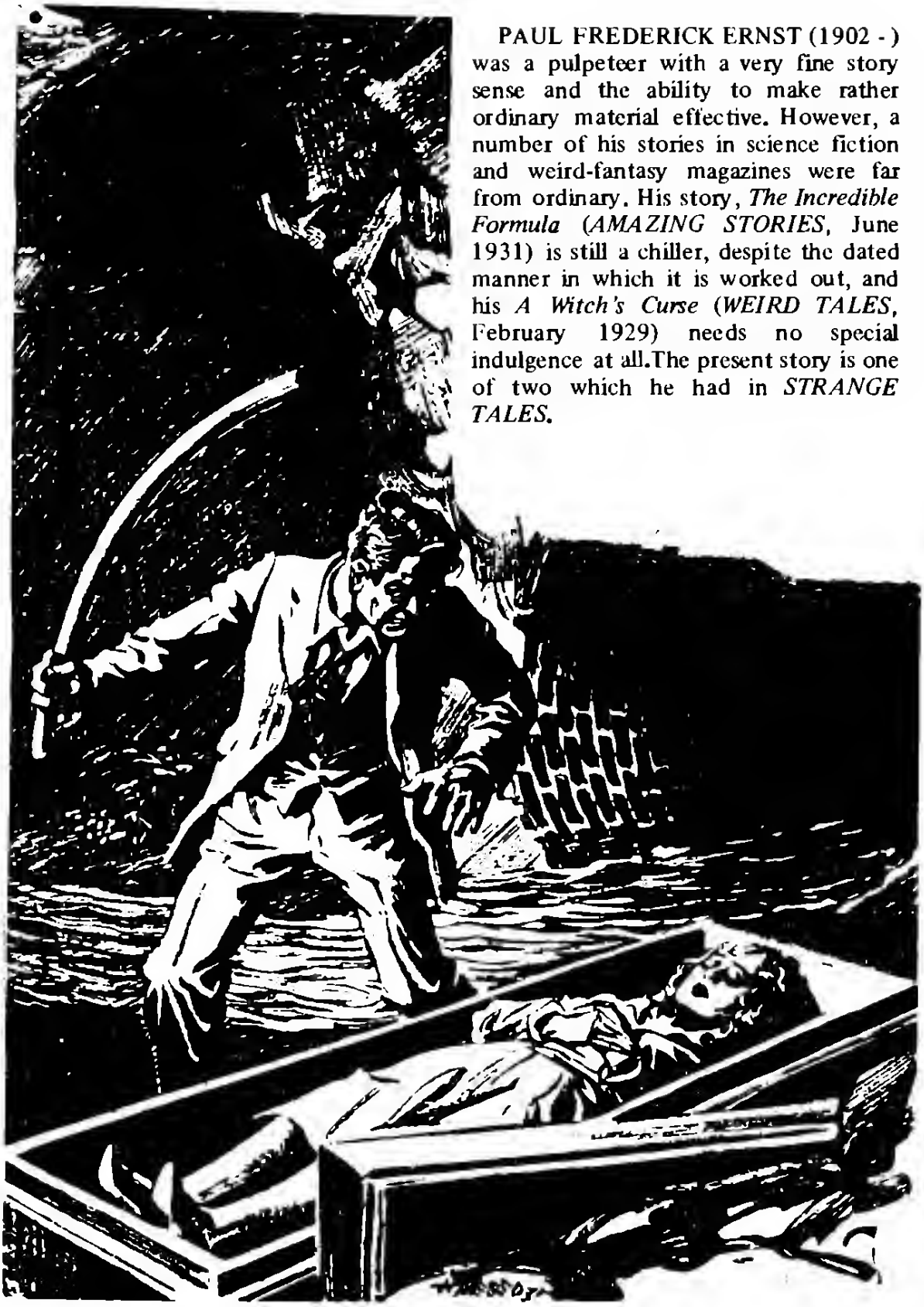
He sighed, instinctively, and placed it in one of the smaller bureau drawers.

Then, strangely happy, contented, he went over and climbed into his bed. He stretched himself out and rolled over on his left side, for he felt very tired, although very happy and contented, and almost instantly fell asleep; but into his dreams of heroic deeds and great daring, and faithful vigils, and honorable trial, he carried the strange conviction which had come to him when he had turned the magnificent armlet about under the light.

The markings on the smooth inside of that clear, pale, heavy metal, were the same as the ancient marred runes, on his moon-dial, down in the garden; those runes which he had studied until he knew them by heart, could draw on paper, with a pencil, unerringly.

And now that he knew in his deep inner consciousness what the runes meant he was ready, with a heart unafraid, to live his life, free and full, and clear, and honorable, and beautiful; a life in union with the moon, his beloved . . . He would know how to rule, when The Destroyer of Delights and the Sunderer of Companies came and took his father away—might it be a long day, in the mercy of Allah!—and he, Said Yussuf should reign in his father's room over the great hillstate of Kangalore.





PAUL FREDERICK ERNST (1902 -) was a pulpeteer with a very fine story sense and the ability to make rather ordinary material effective. However, a number of his stories in science fiction and weird-fantasy magazines were far from ordinary. His story, *The Incredible Formula* (*AMAZING STORIES*, June 1931) is still a chiller, despite the dated manner in which it is worked out, and his *A Witch's Curse* (*WEIRD TALES*, February 1929) needs no special indulgence at all.The present story is one of two which he had in *STRANGE TALES.*

THE DUEL OF THE SORCERERS

by Paul Ernst

(part two)

SYNOPSIS OF PART ONE

PRISCILLA RAND has been attacked by a mysterious illness, and her fiancee, RICK BALLARD, is incredulous, at first, when PROFESSOR THOLL tells him that she is the victim of a vampire. Tholl draws Rick's attention to the odor in the girl's private room at the hospital and says that it is unmistakably the calling card of a vampire.

Ballard joins Tholl in watching, as Tholl is sure that the vampire will return and hopes to trap the creature. The trap fails, but Rick is convinced by what he sees.

Tholl then tells Rick the story behind this attack upon Priscilla, who has not been selected for any particular personal reason. Thirty years back, he had received a large inheritance, which enabled him to retire from teaching and devote full time to study and research into magic, demonology, witchcraft, etc., building up one of the fullest libraries on the subject ever known. He learned of a rare work of Cagliostro – a lost chapter in his material -- which contained keys to tremendous magical power.

He had taken on an assistant, Dr. HERBERT QUOY, who showed no less interest and ability than his own, and sent Quoy to Italy several times, following up clues leading toward the lost Cagliostro, but Quoy returned reporting failure each time. However, Quoy was also showing far more ability and progress than seemed reasonable, and one day Tholl discovered the reason for it: Quoy had actually located the Cagliostro chapter on one of his trips, but concealed his success in order to keep the knowledge for himself alone.

The pupil tried to destroy the master on the spot, but Tholl overcame him, and when the struggle was over, found that he had killed Quoy. However, since among the secrets in the Cagliostro chapter is one dealing with the partial circumvention of death, Tholl realizes, when later the mss. is stolen from a double-locked safe that shows no signs of being tampered with, that Quoy is

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still present. He has transferred his consciousness to another body, a dead body, so that he is a vampire. He must "live" as a vampire does, subject to vampiric disabilities; the principal difference between Quoy and the usual vampire is that Quoy's victims will not themselves become infected with vampirism when they finally die from loss of blood.

The problem is to discover where Quoy spends his days – the time when both the real and the artificial vampire is helpless. After an attack on Rick, which is very nearly successful, Tholl determines to seek out Quoy's body, which has been concealed in a crypt beneath the professor's house. On the way there, they hear newsboys shouting about a kidnapping.

Tholl reanimates the body of Quoy through thaummaturgic arts, as the spirit of the man whose body Quoy stole is imprisoned there, and commands the corpse "to direct us to the presence of – *you know who!*"

"The one you seek . . ." comes the reply. "Stone house with red roof . . .beside the cemetery men call Tyn– Tyn–". The voice falters, says, "Be quick or too late," tries again to get beyond the syllable "Tyn." Then a change comes over it and suddenly it starts to attack Tholl and Rick. They manage to get out in time, and Ballard thinks of Tynsdale Hollow Cemetery as the most likely place to search for Quoy.

IX

"TYNSDALE HOLLOW CEMETERY," said Professor Tholl, looking up from a list of cemeteries in and near the city. "That must be the one. There are no others with a first syllable remotely like that. Come, we'll hurry there at once, and see if there's a house with a red roof."

Out along the river's edge they sped, in a hired motor that broke all speed laws under the guidance of a well-paid driver. They came to Tynsdale Hollow Cemetery, and, as they drove by, Tholl exclaimed aloud with grim triumph.

"There!" he said, pointing.

Rick's eyes followed his leveled finger, and by the light of one of the sparsely-scattered electric lamps, saw an old stone house with a red-tile roof and boarded windows, on a weedy lot just across the fence from the cemetery. Indeed, less than twenty yards away from it was a newly-dug grave, looking like a bloody gash in the earth by reason of the dull reddish color of the dirt prevailing in that section.

They got out, paid the driver, and dismissed the car. Then, sure that no one was around at that late hour to see them, they walked cautiously up to the house, and around it to the rear.

No light showed anywhere in the house. The boarded windows were as blank as blind eyes. An atmosphere of desertion and decay hung over the place; plainly it had not been occupied for years.

"Can this be right?" whispered Rick dubiously, staring about him.

"Next to a graveyard—a deserted house, yes, I think it's the right place," the professor whispered back. "And, God willing, our enemy will be inside alone."

"And if he is?"

"It is near dawn. Between us, we will try to hold him till his trance overcomes him. Then he will be at our mercy."

A doubt that had persisted in Rick's mind since the first mention of tracking Doctor Quoy, came from his lips.

"With all his uncanny powers, won't he know automatically when we are near him? Won't he be aware of all our movements and be ready for us?"

The professor shrugged, "Probably he will. Almost certainly he will! Our only chance is that he may be so engrossed in some of his black work that his very concentration will let us creep up on him." He turned to the locked rear door. It soon opened under his manipulations. He pushed it aside, gently, noiselessly, and the two men tiptoed into a dark room that had once evidently been used as a kitchen.

At once the gruesome stench of death assailed their nostrils. The grave was very close, that odor silently insisted. Death was all around them in that dark old house. But they stole onward, through a doorway, down a hall, and into a middle room that might once have been a drawing room or parlor.

At the threshold of this room they stopped, utterly paralyzed by the sight that met them.

The room was dimly lit by a solitary stub of candle that flickered and guttered on the floor. It had so nearly burned itself out that, just as they stared with terrified eyes at the scene of horror there, the tiny flame leaped higher in its expiring burst, and gilded every detail with pallid flame.

A veritable lake of red widened sluggishly, slowly, in the center

of the floor. The walls were daubed with red; red was smeared on the door-frame beside them. Sodden with it, a little heap of torn blue fabric—what was left of a woman's street-suit lay near the dying candle.

And in the center of the horrible red lake was a white, distorted figure. A girl's figure that seemed at first entirely nude—and at second glance to have a filmy red mantle thrown over it.

The demon, Quoy, was gone. They had come too late to catch him. Only this, his handiwork, was here to greet them.

Silently, almost felled by this crowning horror in a fearful night, they turned and ran.

"Anthropomancy!" said Professor Tholl, as they wearily entered his house. "Anthropomancy! The most hellish of all the black practices. So that is the answer to the 'kidnaping mystery' we heard cried in the papers!"

"May God strike him dead," said Rick hoarsely.

"May God let us extinguish the black soul of him," amended the professor. "Death alone, has no meaning for Doctor Quoy."

They flung themselves down in the professor's room, Rick on a low couch, Tholl on the bed.

"We'll sleep if we can," said Tholl.

"Sleep?" Rick shook his head, "I feel as though I'll never be able to sleep again!"

"Fatigue does marvelous things," said the professor. "Close your eyes; give exhausted nature a chance."

Presently Rick's eyes drooped; now they were closed in slumber.

It may have been exhausted nature that brought him sleep; it may, perhaps, have been a few obscure, odd gestures the old professor made with his slender hands, as though he were weaving strange patterns in the air. . . .

It was afternoon when Rick woke, to find Professor Tholl engaged in the prosaic task of setting a meal on the table in the center of the room. He took a hurried cold shower, dashing the

icy water into his still tired eyes, and sat down to eat a tasteless meal and talk the situation over with the professor.

"After all, we know one thing that is faintly heartening," said Tholl. "Doctor Quoy is at least disturbed enough to want to divine the future in his own fiendish way. That would seem to indicate that he fears that future. If we could only know what he read in the results of his unspeakable surgery!"

"Probably death for you and me," said Rick gloomily, "and, a little later, for Priscilla. Unless," he added hopefully, "he will decide to pick out some other victim, now that Priscilla has been warned against him."

Professor Tholl shook his head. "A vampire never relinquishes a victim," he said heavily. "As long as Doctor Quoy remains at large, Priscilla is doomed."

They went to the hospital, then, to find a somewhat rebellious patient on their hands.

"I'm perfectly all right now," protested Priscilla. "I'm feeling fine. I think I ought to go home."

Tholl gazed thoughtfully at her. It didn't need a specialist to tell that she was speaking the truth. The flush of delicate health lay bright on her skin. Her long, honey-colored hair seemed to crackle with vitality. Her eyes had lost their sunken look, and were clear as spring-water. Nevertheless, Tholl shook his head.

"Who lives at home with you?"

"My aunt," said Priscilla, "and our old servant, Kemp. Kemp is devoted to me. I really think she'd die for me."

"But she is old, and a woman," Tholl broke in. "Certainly not a very stalwart protector! No, you'd better stay on here, where there is a night and day staff, and where Doctor Quoy's attempts against you would be offered at least a little resistance."

"Then you failed in your move against him last night?"

"Yes," said Tholl, "we failed."

He told her a little of what had happened. A very little! Mercifully, he spared her the real story of Quoy's dark activities in the deserted house; and mercifully he said nothing of the true nature of his own work in the secret cellar of his home.

"Then the situation remains unchanged?" faltered Priscilla.

"Yes. There is only one ray of hope. We have found one spot, at least, where Doctor Quoy has been. He may return to it. We will watch that spot. . . .

The watching was to prove fruitless.

For two nights Rick and the professor stood alternate guard over the deserted house with the red roof. During neither of these nights did Quoy visit it—at least not in a form visible to mortal eyes. Then the two had to abandon their watch. The police had found the body; and Rick and Tholl dared not stay near the house for fear they would be implicated in a murder charge.

For a week the sensational story was played up in the newspapers as the undoubted work of a lunatic. And for a week Rick and the professor, the only one beside the perpetrator who knew the truth of the crime, kept close guard over Priscilla to ward off the attack of the deadly enemy—who failed to attack!

"I can't stand much more of this inactive waiting!" snapped Rick at the end of the seventh long night. "Hanging around, doing nothing, knowing nothing, knowing that any moment Doctor Quoy may attack for the last time—"

"What else can we do?" replied Professor Tholl. "As you know, I am spending every possible moment in my laboratory, trying to locate the real, daytime hiding place of Doctor Quoy. Until I can do that, we can't move against him"

"Are you any nearer success now than when you started your laboratory experiments?" demanded Rick.

"No," admitted the professor, "I'm not. As yet I don't know what is to be our next move."

X

It was the custom of the two to rise from their fitful daytime sleep in the early afternoon, force themselves to eat a kind of breakfast-luncheon, and go to the hospital before dusk fell. But next afternoon this procedure was varied.

When Rick woke and glanced automatically at the clock, he saw that it was five minutes past four. Even then he woke up, not because his jangled nerves warned him it was so late, but because someone was shaking him violently. He blinked dazedly,

still half-asleep, to find the keen face of Professor Tholl gazing excitedly down at him.

"Rick!" came his voice again, now penetrating Rick's dulled consciousness like a knife blade. "Rick! Wake up! I've got it! At last I've found where Doctor Quoy hides from the daylight! Dress and come with me at once."

Rick was instantly on his feet. "You know where he is?"

"Yes, I know! There is nothing for us to do now, but go to him in his helpless coma and snuff out that dark intelligence forever!"

Rick proceeded to dress hastily. There was no thought of eating now. The thing to do was go at once and reach the terrible Quoy before darkness fell!

"Where is he?" he demanded grimly, as the two started precipitately down the stairs.

"Follow me," was all Tholl said, as he hurried down to the street.

A motor was waiting at the curb. It was not a regulation cab. Unusually small windows were set in sides and rear; and the rear one was covered by a roll-curtain. It seemed to be waiting on order of the professor, however, so Rick stepped in at once.

Tholl gave orders in a low voice, and the car started rapidly down the street. The professor, as they rolled along, told how he had located Quoy at last.

There was a certain herb, it seemed, that emitted a dense smoke if burned properly in a special crucible. In that smoke, if one were initiated, one could see distant images as on a cinema screen. For days Tholl had been trying to wrench the secret of Quoy's hiding-place from the smoke. This afternoon he had succeeded!

"And we are now on our way, at last, to end the career of this infernal being!" marveled Rick, who had listened, absorbed, to the account.

"Not quite yet," replied the old professor; "but in a very short while! Now we are going to pick up the actual instrument that will destroy him—a tool specially prepared in special surroundings. When we have got that, we shall go to Quoy!"

At that moment the car stopped.

Tholl ordered the driver to wait, then turned and hastened away.

Rick, stumbling after him, had only an instant of time to realize that they were crossing a weedy, open field. Then they were in an impossibly narrow underground passage of some sort, which extended for a long distance to widen into a subterranean room.

In this room was apparatus of a kind for which Rick had no adequate words of description. There were oddly curved rods, and earthern retorts. A pile of dried weeds took up one corner. In another corner was a long narrow box that must certainly be a coffin. In the center of the room was a low workbench, and on this bench was a curious thing.

It was a sharpened piece of wood about three feet long and several inches thick. The sharpened end tapered to a fine, almost needlelike, point, and its blackened surface indicated that it had been hardened in fire.

"The stake!" breathed the old professor. "The aspen stake that shall be plunged into his breast!'

He clutched it, and they hurried back through the passage to the weedy, open space and to the waiting motor.

"And now," said Tholl, his voice vibrant, "for Doctor Quoy!" Faster the cab flew. It was like a dream ride. Then Rick, glancing out the small windows began to see familiar street sights. Here he recognized a building, there an electric sign.

"Why!" he ejaculated at last, "we're going directly back toward your house! Quoy is hidden near there?"

"Yes," Professor Tholl fingered the sharp point of the aspen stake. His eyes were glittering. "You see the ingenuity of his choice? We would never dream of searching near at home. But we've got him now!"

Rick closed his eyes while a wave of exultation passed through him. With wide unseeing gaze, he followed the professor as the cab stopped, up a walk and into an old doorway.

The professor held up his finger for silence, and began to tiptoe up a curving staircase. Cautiously Rick followed, taking

infinite pains to make no noise. They entered a room, an ordinary room outfitted as a bed chamber. And there on the bed Rick saw lying a straight still figure. Even at that tense moment Rick found time to be surprised and a little taken back. He had visioned the sinister Doctor Quoy as passing his vampire's sleep in some hideous, buried place—not in an ordinary bedroom in an ordinary residence. But the thought passed immediately from his mind. The important thing was that Quoy was here. Actually in the same room with him lying helpless in slumber!

Almost holding his breath lest he wake the sleeper, though the professor had told him that the coma of vampirism is almost that of death, Rick moved toward that still figure on the bed. Beside him tiptoed the professor.

Nearer they came. Nearer . . .till they were bending over the sleeping figure, and gazing directly down at that face which was an incarnation of evil. Fascinated, Rick stared at it. The red, red lips; the pallid skin, like a pale, unhealthy, mushroom growth; the long, slit eyes hidden now under eyelids that looked like unwholesome bruises in the waxy countenance!

"Victory!" whispered the professor. His right arm, with the stake held in his hand like a short spear, was raised high. "Victory!"

Like a splendid statue of an old warrior, he stood there, the stake poised for its deadly down-stroke. Then, slowly, with trembling arm, he lowered it. His eyes closed. A hissing moan came from his lips.

"I dare not," he muttered. "I dare not. I am old. My arm is no longer strong. I doubt if I have the power to thrust so deep."

He turned suddenly to Rick, and thrust the stake toward him.

"You!" he said. *"You do it!"*

Rick took the stake, staring at the old professor in a dreamy sort of surprise. With that fearfully sharpened point, it seemed even a child could find the monster's heart! But he thought he could divine the true reason for the professor's hesitancy.

This unnatural creature stretched before them was in a sense Tholl's own creation. He had given him unwittingly the opportunity to steal and use for his own purposes the awful

secrets in Cagliostro's lost document. This chance to undo, with a single stroke, the evil he had done was too much for him; it had unstrung him.

"Well," thought Rick, "*I* have no such self-doubt! I'll send this stake through chest and heart and back, and into the bed beneath!"

Grasping the lancelike thing, he raised it even as Tholl had done, had poised it over the immobile figure. But there he, too, halted for an instant.

The training of everyday, prosaic life is hard to break. Tholl had told him-and heaven knew he believed sincerely—that the body before him was not alive, was simply undead, an animated corpse kept up only by its vampire diet. Nevertheless, to his eyes and instinct, the thing *looked* like the living body of any other man. And the plunging of that aspen stake into the heart was no less than murder!

He had never dreamed it would be so hard a thing to do. He had fancied that, given the opportunity, he would drive the stake into Quoy's breast with no more compunction than he would have smashed the head of a snake.

But now, standing beside the hated figure, with the aspen stake held high, he hesitated. . . .

Murder! his instinct shrieked to him against all the dictates of reason. Cold-blooded murder, that's what it was! To stab an unconscious, helpless man. . . .

"Strike!" said the professor. "Be quick—before it is too late!"

Rick's fingers tightened on the smooth wood. He glared down at the evil, red-lipped face, gaining strength for his act from the loathsomeness of the pallid features. His arm tensed for the downward stroke. . . .

A crash like the report of a pistol shot split the air. Rick's arm faltered. The descent of the stake was stayed. He glanced down to see if Doctor Quoy had stirred in his trance.

He was looking, not at the replusive face of Quoy, but at the bearded, venerable countenance of Professor Tholl! And the body on the bed was the body of Tholl, just moving now with returning consciousness as sleep passed from it.

Physically, Doctor Quoy cannot touch me," the professor said. "That much power at least I have to combat him with. So he plotted to have you kill me, in the nightmare he sent you. He had to have you get the stake with your own hand, because he could not bring it to you: I have reason to think he can pass through walls of brick and stone, but I am very sure he could not drag so inanimate a lump of substance as a stick of wood with him."

Rick's face was buried in his shaking hands. "My God!" he groaned. "What a frightfully close call! One more second—"

Tholl stared at him in blended pity and horror. Then he glanced toward the window. Beside that lay a heavy screen he was in the habit of setting before the opened window to keep the direct draft from him while he slept. A gust of wind had swept through the window, tipping over the heavy screen with a sharp crash. On that his life had hung!

Then, as Tholl gazed at the window, the color left his face and his eyes widened with realization of a vital, an ominous fact that their preoccupation had thus far kept the two men from noting.

"Good heavens!" he cried. "Look!"

Rick whirled to face the window too. Then his own face went white.

The window was an oblong of pure black. Night had fallen—deep night—how long ago he could not guess.

He glanced at the clock. The hands pointed to ten minutes past eleven. They had slept for fourteen hours, for over three hours of which Priscilla Rand had been left unguarded and alone. Rick had merely, in his dream, thought it was still afternoon; actually he had gone out into pitch darkness, returned in darkness, and turned on the lights in the room under the hypnotic power of Quoy.

The ringing of the telephone burst in on the men's dazed thoughts. Rick and Tholl gazed at each other; then the professor moved to answer it.

"Professor Tholl?" came a woman's voice. "This is the Grace Hospital. Do you, or Mr. Ballard, know where Miss Priscilla Rand has gone?"

With difficulty, Professor Tholl forced himself to answer. And

then he had to repeat it before the operator at Grace Hospital understood his words.

"We haven't heard from Miss Rand. She is not at the hospital?"

"No. She has left. Her clothes are not here, and she said nothing about leaving, and no one has seen her go. Shall we notify the police?"

"Not—just yet," said Tholl. "Wait. We will be down at once!"

"Gone . . .?" whispered Rick as the professor hung up.

"Yes. God help her! Quoy has surpassed himself tonight. He meant to kill me, have you dragged to a murderer's cell, and make away with Priscilla, all in one diabolical night! You and I, by the grace of heaven, escaped. But Priscilla—"

He stopped. In Rick's eyes was a picture of the thing they had seen under the red roof. The white, distorted figure in the crimson lake . . .anthropomancy. . . .

XI

IN HER ROOM AT GRACE HOSPITAL Priscilla had marked with impatience the slow flight of the afternoon hours. It was irksome, this continued stay, when she felt perfectly well. She was tired of reading; tired of roaming from her room to the terrace, and being stared at curiously by really sick people; tired of having monotonous hospital meals served her, and being hemmed in by an invalid's routine.

The place had become a jail to her. Nevertheless, she realized the wisdom of staying here in obedience to the professor's wishes. Involuntarily her hand went to her throat, where two sets of small red marks had barely healed. . . .

Restlessly she walked to the window, which faced west, and watched the lowering sun. Six-thirty. Rick and the professor were usually here by now. She wished they would come.

As the sun sank lower and lower, she began to have a growing unease. Again her hand strayed to her throat. If they were forced to leave her alone another night, she would face it with all the courage she could muster. But the thought of that eventuality, of staying awake hour after hour through the long night, waiting,

waiting to fight off a possible attack of the malignant Quoy, as she had done a week ago, turned her pale.

She called the nurse. "Has Mr. Ballard, or Professor Tholl telephoned the hospital?" she asked anxiously.

"No, Miss Rand."

"Oh . . .I thought one of them might have called you with instructions for the night."

The nurse left. Priscilla tried to interest herself in a book. It was a dismal failure. Her eyes kept straying toward the window, where the last dim red of sunset barely showed.

Night fell. An odd drowsiness stole over her. She was a little surprised at it. Having no outlet for her energies, she had been finding it hard to sleep nights. And now, at only a little after eight, and worried as she was by the failure of Rick and Tholl to appear, she was sleepy and found it more and more difficult to keep her eyes open!

Determinedly she fought against her drowsiness; then she began to yield to it. Rick and the professor would surely be along soon. Why not take a nap till they arrived?

Almost with the thought, sleep dropped on her. Deep, thick sleep, that yet left her dimly conscious of her surroundings. A queer sleep which, despite her will, she could not shake off—but a sleep which left her five senses open to vague and far-off impressions.

She knew, for instance, when the hands of the clock beside her pointed to a quarter of ten. She heard the nurse tiptoe in, and out again, after glancing at her and turning on the dim night-light. And she was fully conscious of a curious odor that began to permeate the air.

It was a revolting odor, a stench that nauseated her. She moved uneasily, but was still unable to break the chains of the strange, numbing sleep that bound her.

And now she became aware of two eyes staring at her. Her own eyes were closed; but still she could see those staring orbs, as though they were etched flamingly on the insides of her eyelids.

Long, narrow, and black as jet, they glared unblinkingly at her. And soon she was rising slowly from the bed, and was

mechanically dressing. A small part of her was aware that she didn't want to do this—that above all things she must resist the unspoken command to be read in those narrow black eyes. But she couldn't resist. Plastic as wax to the will behind the glittering eyes she walked to the door of her room.

Down the corridor she went, seeming to float more than to walk. There was no one in the corridor; no one was near the window leading to the fire-escape ladder. Afterward the nurse on duty in that wing was to recall that she had been summoned to a far room, only to find the patient there asleep . . .

Still only mistily conscious of what was happening, as though groping blindly at the bottom of a sea of horror, Priscilla descended the steep iron steps of the escape, to find herself on the ground.

Helplessly obedient to the inexorable will flaming in the evil black eyes, she started off through the starless night, seeing only as wavering phantoms the few passersby on the back streets along which lay her path . . .

The hospital was seething with activity when Rick and Tholl got there. Nurses and internes hurried quietly through the corridors, and in and out of rooms. Rick and the professor were met by the head physician of the staff who had chanced to be awake and dressed when called at his home.

"This is most mysterious, most distressing," he said. "The only thing we can believe is that Miss Rand walked down the corridor and out the fire-escape window in her sleep—or something—" He glanced intently at them. "There has been some mention of mental unbalance in connection with her case, I believe?"

Rick started hotly to reply; but the professor spoke first. "Yes, she had occasional mild delusions."

"Ah!" said the doctor quickly. This was the first time such a thing had happened at Grace Hospital. He grasped at a chance to absolve the institution from accusations of carelessness. "I hardly credited the sleep-walking theory, yet for an adult person to crawl so secretively down a fire-escape at this time of night . . ." He ended the sentence with a shrug, and did not mention something that had been persistently puzzling him: a lingering

remnant of some curious odor that had greeted his nostrils when he stepped into the room of the missing girl.

"What have you done to locate her?" asked Tholl.

"Nothing. We understood you to say over the phone that nothing definite was to be done till you got here."

"But you have searched the building?"

"Thoroughly. She is not in it."

"Don't be too alarmed by this," said Tholl. "I have little doubt we'll find her at home when we go there to look for her." His voice and face expressed only mild concern. He turned and walked toward the door.

Rick clutched frantically at his arm. "For God's sake, Professor–" he began.

"Ssh!" hissed Tholl. "You don't want the police in this, do you?"

Rick stopped. Vampires! Dead bodies that talked! Aspen stakes and the black arts! No, he did not want the police in this.

"The affair must be reported to the proper authorities if Miss Rand is not found at once," the doctor called after them.

"Of course," said Tholl. "We will phone you if we don't find her at home. Come, Rick."

For a moment the two stood in front of the hospital entrance in frozen indecision. In what festering dark spot in the great city was Priscilla hidden? And how could they move to find and help her?

Tholl's eyes were nearly closed with the concentration of his keen old mind.

"I think," he said at last, "there may be a chance–just a chance–through this dream of yours that came so close to tragedy for us both. From your description of the spot where you got that aspen stake, it sounds as though it might be Quoy's secret hiding place. Could you possibly find your way there again?"

"I doubt it," despaired Rick. "I visited it only in a hypnotic trance. Hardly once did I glance out the window of the car I went in. The only clue I have is"–he pointed to his knees–"this brownish-red dirt I picked up while there."

Tholl glanced down. Adhering to the dark fabric of Rick's suit were two damp, discolored areas that could only have been caused by his kneeling somewhere in a muddy spot.

"That is all?" said Tholl. "Think! Think hard! Is there *nothing* you remember that might help us guess where this dream place is?"

Rick gnawed at his upper lip. Then a gleam came to his eyes.

"Yes! I remember now! There *was* something! At the very end of our trip we turned in through high, iron gates. And on the gates, worked in iron, were the letters T. H. C."

"T. H. C.," repeated the professor. "T. H. C. It carries a memory of some sort . . .Seems as though we should know those letters . . .what they stand for . . ." He stared at the drying patches of damp earth on Rick's knees. "And the curious color of that dirt! Brownish-red. . . .That strikes a chord, too. . . ."

He stopped. Then with a strangled cry, he turned and began running toward a cab that was parked down the street. "Where are you going?" Rick called. "What's up?"

"I'm going for Doctor Quoy!" cried the professor. "T. H.C.—and the color of that dirt! Don't you know? Can't you guess?"

Rick's head snapped back as he, too, caught the significance of the two clues. "Tynsdale Hollow Cemetery!"

"Yes. We should have guessed it immediately," panted the professor. "The place for death—and Quoy is but death walking abroad—is in a graveyard. And what more likely one than that beside the house with the red roof where we saw. . . ."

"But the chamber I entered was underground!" said Rick, interrupting before the professor could finish. "And I reached it through a subterranean passage! There is no such arrangement at Tynsdale Hollow Cemetery!"

"How do you know?" snapped Tholl. "The ground there is low. There might be an extra large drain to carry off occasional surface water."

Once again they fled through the night in a speeding hired car to the vicinity of Tynsdale Hollow Cemetery, the memory of what they had found on their first trip there weighing down the

thoughts of each. Once more they passed the graveyard, to conceal their true destination from the driver.

Quickly they went to the big iron gate after the car had passed out of sight. It was closed now, that gate. It was past twelve; nearly one o'clock; and no one was supposed to have business there at such an hour.

The stone fence that flanked the road was easily scaled, however; and the two climbed it and returned to the gate, inside the grounds, as their starting point.

"You remember nothing but this gate?" the professor asked. "Nothing at all? Try to recall every move you made."

Furrows appeared in Rick's forehead as he tried desperately to remember the exact course of his nightmare.

"We came in through here . . .we turned right and then left. . . ."

"That must have been following this lane!" snapped Tholl, pointing to a side road that curved right along the fence from the gate, and then straightened out to parallel the center road. "We'll go down it!"

They did, slowly, while Rick strove to remember.

"I seem to recall hearing a heavy ring of metal on masonry . . .might have been the sound of a manhole lid lifted from a concrete inset. . . ."

"Enough," breathed Tholl. "It was—that!"

He walked through the grass and weeds toward a small circular spot that was bare of vegetation. And this spot, as they got nearer to it, proved to be a rusted iron manhole cover.

Tholl knelt, and put his ear to it. "Listen," he said.

Rick did; and he heard a trickle of water down beneath the lid.

"A drain, even as I thought it might be. It probably runs under this entire section," said the professor. His voice grew hushed, as he added: "This is the entrance! I feel it; I *know* it! This leads to the real hiding place of Quoy—probably the place where Priscilla is now being held. That is, if she is not already—"

"Don't say it!" implored Rick. With a frantic heave, he lifted the heavy iron lid from the clammy cement well it covered. "Come on, let's hurry."

XII

SULTRY BLACK CLOUDS PRESSED down overhead. A moaning rising wind tossed the branches of the gnarled trees that dotted the old cemetery. The night was as black as a night can be, and heavy with an approaching storm. Indeed, the first large drops of rain just spattered against their faces as Rick and the professor lowered themselves into the shallow well beneath the manhole lid.

Down the cement walls they climbed, on iron rungs set in the stonework, to the bottom. There they found two drains, about three feet in diameter, leading away from it. One went out of the cemetery toward the great city main that lined the street. The other led toward the heart of the graveyard.

"This way," said Tholl unhesitatingly, indicating the latter passage.

They started laboriously down. It was more like a tunnel than a drain; a continuous, tiny arched vault of rotting brick, laid before the advent of the more modern hollow tile, resembling in miniature some of the elaborate sewers that underlie many of Europe's cities.

On hands and knees they made their way. The darkness was so thick that they seemed to breathe it, to absorb it in clogged and clammy pores. It weighed on them like a heavy physical load. Rick reflected that he knew now what it was like to be blind, as he crawled on hands and knees down the damp, chill drain.

The path was slightly winding; and here and there the two bumped helplessly against a turning. Also here and there their questing hands sank into mounds of loose earth where the vaulted brickwork above had given way and allowed the soft dirt to filter through. And once, eternities from the time they had left the well, Rick's fingers encountered something smooth and irregularly round and large, with three jagged holes in it, two of which had once held eye-balls and the third of which had been covered with the flesh and substance of a nose. . . .

On and on they went, silently, like damned souls doomed to spend the rest of time worming along a tunnel bored in solid blackness. Only once was the silence broken.

"Do you suppose this may be a trap?" whispered Rick, wiping the perspiration from his forehead and leaving there a smear of dank and musty earth.

"It may well be," came Professor Tholl's voice in the darkness. "But we must go on. . . ."

And on they went until at last they saw, still far ahead of them, a ghostly greenish light which seemed to exude phosphorescently from the damp brickwork of the drain.

The light grew clearer as they advanced; and then, faintly at first but growing rapidly stronger, came the loathsome odor with which they were now only too familiar!

Rick stopped, and turned to look at Tholl. He could dimly make out his face now, spectral and distorted in the ghostly greenish light. And he saw in Tholl's eyes the same thought he himself harbored.

Crawling down that horrible passage, they would emerge head first, and utterly helpless, into whatever subterranean chamber lay before them! A child could beat them down before they could rise to their feet and lift cramped arms to defend themselves!

And then, as they hesitated there in fearsome realization of their helplessness, a scream came keening down the passage. A girl's scream; high and imploring and broken with terror.

"Priscilla!" said Rick hoarsely; and he rushed forward on the slippery drain-floor, all thought of risk forgotten, at a speed that left Tholl far behind.

Again the scream burst out—to stop as though sliced through with a knife blade just as Rick got finally to the source of the ghastly greenish light; a cavern-like chamber which looked vaguely, horribly familiar—the room of his dream!

They had accomplished their first object. They had searched out the final haunt of the evil genius, Quoy, at last. But where was he? And where was Priscilla?

In the phosphorescent light Rick could see no moving thing. Yet that fearful shriek had told of the girl's presence here; and the grisly stench of rotting corruption told with equal certainty of the near presence of the vampire-thing they sought.

Professor Tholl emerged panting from the tunnel and joined him. Warily, the two stood in the center of the cavern, and gazed about them.

The gruesome vault, deep-buried in the heart of the old cemetery, which Doctor Quoy had hollowed out for his secret hiding-place, was in effect only a widened spot in the drain-tunnel.

It was perhaps eight feet in height, and ten square; the walls were the raw earth itself, unsupported in any way. Down from the roof, like clutching, gnarled talons, protruded the roots of trees. Through a shallow channel in the floor ran a tiny brook, passing from the drain-mouth opposite the one through which they had just emerged, across the vault and into the exit drain leading down to the circular well. Even as they gazed, this small brook ran faster and became more swollen, hinting that the storm outside had broken in its full fury.

Strange, curved rods of metal, and earthern retorts lay scattered here and there; along one wall was ranged a heavy, wooden workbench. In one corner was a heap of shriveled herbs. In another corner—

"It may be he's lurking in *there!*" came the professor's tense voice. "Although it is not yet daylight, and I can't conceive of his being inactive."

Rick caught up one of the curved metal rods and grasped it clubwise. Then he sprang for the thing in the corner—a plain wood coffin with the lid set in place but not screwed down.

His fingers clutched the edge of the lid. He started to raise it. . . .

With every nerve in his body tingling, he threw the lid back and leaped aside with his club raised for a crashing blow. And then he almost dropped it as a shock of surprise terror and grief flooded through him.

Lying there in the coffin, her cheeks as white as fresh snow and her hands folded over her breast in the pose of death, was Priscilla.

Rick groaned aloud. Priscilla . . .dead! But even as his eyes

closed and the world seemed to topple, Professor Tholl brushed past him and started hurriedly to lift her from the casket.

"She's alive!" he said. "Unconscious—but alive! We were not too late."

A mocking voice suddenly sounded, seeming to come from every corner of the vault at once.

"Yes, she lives. You have rescued her, and found me out at last. You have triumphed."

Rick spun about, to glance in all directions for the source of the voice. He saw no trace of its dread owner. Meanwhile, the odor of death had suddenly grown stronger in the place.

The mocking, sinister voice went on: "You have triumphed—if one can call it triumph for the prey to stumble blindly into the trap and find the bait still alive!"

As the words were concluded, there was a dull crash. Rick and Tholl whirled around to see that a heavy iron plate had thudded down to form a tight barrier over the mouth of the drain into which the surface rain water had been pouring at an ever increasing rate, and from which they had just entered.

The entrance to the trap, now that they were securely inside it, had been duly closed!

"The omniscient Professor Tholl and his lovelorn assistant!" the voice gibed on. "What chance has the humble Doctor Quoy against two such foes?"

The voice had gradually centralized, until now Rick thought it came from the drain entrance out of which the water was flowing—opposite the entrance that had been blocked by the iron plate.

Grimly, swinging the curved metal rod in his hand, he started toward the spot. But before his third step had been completed, he found himself rooted to the floor as though the air had hardened into transparent stone around him.

Near the open drain-mouth a shadow suddenly fell. And before Rick could decide whether it was shadow or substance, whether it had come from the drain-mouth or had just materialized out of the air, he found himself staring into Doctor

Quoy's jet black eyes and shuddering at the twisted smile on his blood-red lips.

"And so the struggle ends between us, Professor Tholl." Quoy went on. "And in at the death—a purely literal phrase on this occasion—are your stalwart young assistant and the doll-faced girl he sprang so gallantly to rescue. I congratulate you on your victory."

The lips of Tholl moved desperately in incantations designed to paralyze his antagonist as that antagonist had paralyzed Rick. The incantations failed before Quoy's power.

"It will *yet* be victory!" he panted at last. "Thief and murderer!"

"Thief?" Doctor Quoy broke in suavely. "You are still bitter about my acquisition of the lost Cagliostro, I see. But I am utilizing it properly, whereas you would have played with it as a mere dilettante. Murderer? What would you? You know as well as I how I must derive my sustenance. And you know as well as I that the most effective way of divining the future is by reading the signs to be obtained—only with human sacrifice."

"You fiend from hell!" grated Tholl.

Doctor Quoy bowed ironically, giving never a glance in the direction of Rick, who was straining to break loose from whatever power it was that held him motionless.

"The compliment is treasured for the sincerity with which it is delivered. And now, if you will pardon me, I will leave the three of you to the pleasant finis which lies before you."

"You cannot touch me!" declared Tholl, drawing himself up. "Small as my power is, compared to the power of the possessor of Cagliostro's knowledge, it is yet sufficient to keep you from laying a finger on me."

"Granted," was the cold reply. "But while I may not have the pleasure of killing you directly, I can see to it that the forces of nature do it for me. Look at the floor!"

Rick's eyes swept downward with the professor's. And at what he saw, and at the significance he read in it, he exclaimed aloud.

The floor was covered with half an inch of water, that had overflowed its shallow trough. Unable to take its usual course

through the lower drain entrance, dammed by the iron plate, the water was forming a pool which at every instant grew higher.

"Outside," said Quoy, "a storm is raging. You may have noticed that it was starting to rain as you entered here? Well, that rain is now a downpour. As you know, all the surface water from this entire low section about here, drains through this vault. If it cannot get out of the vault—but you can guess the rest."

"May God strike you dead," shouted Professor Tholl. He sprang toward the mocking figure, splashing furiously in the deepening water. But as he reached Doctor Quoy, the man was no longer a thing of substance. Tholl's hands grasped futilely at empty air.

A last few words were conveyed to them by the mocking, devilish voice: "I will leave you now. When I return at dawn, to unbar the lower drain and let the water out, I shall welcome with pleasure three new bodies on which to perform certain experiments I have in mind."

The voice sounded no more. Every instinct told them Doctor Quoy had truly gone.

A moment the two men looked at each other; then, on common impulse, they leaped to the sliding iron plate that dammed the lower drain.

XIII

RICK AND THE PROFESSOR wrestled with the iron plate, but they could no more move it than shift the solid earth about it. It did not even quiver under their desperate heaving. Only a moment was required to show them that *that* way out of their dreadful predicament was hopelessly barred.

"The other drain!" cried Rick. "Perhaps we can find a way out there."

They stooped to enter the drain from which the flood was pouring, and splashed a few paces on the long slant up. But scarcely five yards from the vault, the drain separated into multifarious branches, each far too small to accommodate a human body.

And now a cry sent them hurrying back. They found Priscilla sitting up and staring about her with wondering, fear-filled eyes.

The chill water in which she had lain, now covering the floor for three or four inches, had ended her unconsciousness.

"Where are we?" she faltered. "What is this place? Rick—Professor—"

In a few words, Professor Tholl outlined their position. Priscilla went white as death; but she did not faint or grow hysterical. Her courage, proven before, was even equal to this emergency.

"The only two outlets from this vault are the two drains," Tholl summed up. "The one is barred by the iron drop-door; the other, a few feet away, is too small for even a cat to crawl through. Meanwhile, the water—"

All glanced downward. The water had risen till it was halfway between their ankles and their knees. It seemed to increase in rapidity of rising, too, which was only natural: the furious downpour outside would drain more and more rapidly as the surface earth became saturated and absorbed the falling water less and less easily.

Above them was, probably, twenty feet of solid earth. Around them was Mother Earth itse'f. About them the flood rose with increasing swiftness. Now it had reached their knees—now almost to their waists.

Priscilla drew close to Rick. Wordlessly, he put his arm around her shoulders. Tholl's head lowered till his beard swept his chest.

Silently the three waited, while the swirling, muddy water rose higher and higher.

Suddenly Rick pushed himself away from Priscilla and faced the professor with a wild gleam in his eyes.

"My God!" he shouted, "why didn't we think of it before! We can save ourselves."

Tholl and Priscilla stared at him with the same thought in the mind of each. The strain. . . .

"Easy, Rick," said the professor soothingly. "Don't go to pieces." He laid his hand on the younger man's arm.

Impatiently, Rick shook it off and waded toward the heavy wooden bench, which was just beginning to float free of the floor.

"The other drain!" he cried, his voice so uneven and cracked that Tholl's muscles tensed to protect himself from a possible insane attack. "This bench! The other drain!" said Rick excitedly. "Good heavens! The simplest thing—yet we might well have died for not having thought of it!"

Desperately he tugged the heavy bench toward the drain from which the water poured. "If Quoy can block the one passage, to keep the water in this vault," he explained, "we can block the other—*to keep the water out!* Now do you see?"

The professor did see! With an exclamation, he hurried to help move the bench. They propped it endways against the drain-mouth, and felt with their fingers beneath the surface of the water to see if it fitted flush with the brickwork. It did. Save in a few small places the wooden planks pressed snugly against the mortared bricks of the drain entrance. But those few places, too, were plugged efficiently: Rick reached out and grasped an armful of the floating herbs and wadded them into compact masses to stop the gaps.

The rush of water was cut off. Very, very slowly, the flood seeped in at minute apertures around their crude dam; but the three were saved for an indefinite time—as long, probably, as Rick and the professor would have the strength to stand with their backs leaning against the bench to hold it in place. To this small extent, at least, the machinations of Doctor Quoy had been thwarted.

But how were they ever to get out of their ghastly tomb?

Priscilla voiced the thought of all: "It seems to me we have only put off dying a little longer. We'll never be able to leave this place, unless a miracle happens."

She looked with faint hope at the professor. But he shook his head. "No my child. I am not able to work miracles. A few things, elementary in themselves but terrifying and inexplicable to those unacquainted with the black arts, I can perform. But to get our solid bodies through these solid walls and to the outer air—that I cannot!"

"Then," said Priscilla simply, "our miracle must come from another source."

And her head bowed humbly, while her lips moved with the words of a childish, almost forgotten supplication her mother had taught her long ago to repeat each night beside her bed. . . .

Hour dragged slowly after hour, while Tholl and Rick leaned grimly back against the bench that kept them from being submerged. With the chill of the water and the monotony of their position, their muscles grew ever more cramped, till even breathing was an agony to them. But they dared not relax. The flood in the ramified drainage system behind them would fill the vault with a rush now, accumulated as it was, if the bench ever slipped.

"A quarter after four," muttered Rick, cautiously freeing one hand and looking at his watch, which he had put in an upper pocket to keep it clear of the water. "Dawn comes about five o'clock, at this time of year. And with the dawn will come Doctor Quoy!"

Priscilla and the professor said nothing. It had not needed Rick's remark to remind them of that. The vampire's parting sentence—that he would return at dawn and find three new bodies for his experiments—continually burned in the brain of each. It happened that he would return to find bodies still alive, but this was a condition he could easily change.

"Unless," said Rick, "we could catch him for one minute off guard."

"We couldn't leave this bench long enough to avail ourselves of the one minute!" Tholl pointed out.

Rick was silent for a moment. "But surely there may be some way . . .something we can do. . . ." he insisted.

Priscilla was the next to speak. "Professor," she said suddenly, "just how much like a normal human being is a vampire?"

"Why, not at all like one," said Tholl, his brows knitting. "A vampire is not alive; it is an undead thing actuated by a living intelligence."

"But its body—it is forced to take nourishment, of a sort, like any other body—"

"Oh, I see what you mean," said the professor. "Well, in its ordinary functions, a vampire's body *is* much like that of a living,

normal person. It feeds in its own ghastly way, and breathes."

"Breathes!" repeated Priscilla, her white face showing sudden eagerness. "Breathes! That's what I was wondering about. Then the vampire, Quoy can't enter this prison of ours till it's emptied of water!"

The two men gazed at her wondering what she had in mind.

"I think there's a ray of hope," she said softly. "Doctor Quoy must be sure this crypt is flooded. Before he enters here, he will go through all the motions of emptying it. One of those motions will be—the opening of that iron gate!"

"That's sound logic," commented Tholl.

"What of it?" said Rick dully. Priscilla outlined more completely the thought that had come to her. "He will have to open the floodgate from a distance: that drain leading to the outer world will be a rushing torrent impassable even to him till the flow is over. That means there will be a lapse of several minutes between the time the flood-gate is lifted and the time he enters here!"

"Well?" said Rick, still perplexed.

Well—suppose we let loose the flood accumulated behind the bench the instant the iron plate is raised. The water will all be drained out, even as Doctor Quoy anticipates. He will come in here expecting to find us drowned. Isn't it possible that he will be careless—off guard as Rick said—and that we can strike some blow against him before he has realized exactly what has happened?"

"Wonderful!" said Rick. "Priscilla, you're a marvel! There's just one thing. . . ." He looked speculatively at the roof of the crypt, judging its height from the floor. "There'll be a lively few minutes in here while the water we're holding behind this bench pours out! It may fill the vault completely for a long enough time to drown us after all!"

"There's no other alternative," snapped Tholl. "If only Priscilla's reasoning is correct, and he *will* have to open the water-way. . . ."

Tensely, the three stared at the iron cover that shut off the mouth of the lower passage. They could just see the top of it in

the dim greenish light, over the flood that washed around them, and they watched it till their eyes ached. It remained immovable.

"Twenty minutes till dawn," said Rick, moistening his lips.

"He *must* come soon—if he's coming here at all," said the professor.

Wide-eyed, with life hanging in the balance, they stared at the iron barrier.

"Eighteen minutes. . . ." muttered Rick; and then, "fifteen. . . ."

"I think it's moving," whispered Priscilla.

Holding their breaths, they all watched. And it seemed as though a slight ripple showed in the murky water next to the iron plate.

The next instant it was confirmed. All felt a tugging at their ankles and legs as the flood in the vault began to sweep down the lower drain. And the next moment after that they saw the blackness of the passage mouth as the iron plate swung soundlessly up to leave the entrance clear.

In a few moments the water in the vault had swirled noisily down the tunnel, leaving only shallow pools on the floor under their feet.

Rick glanced at the professor, who nodded.

"Now!" said Tholl. "Find something to hang on to. Anyone who is sucked down into the passage with the flood. . . ."

Simultaneously the two men leaped away from the propped-up bench. It went down with a crash as the surging water behind it jammed forward. In an instant the crypt was a boiling whirlpool, with the three being tossed this way and that as if they were straws.

"The roots!" shouted Rick.

He had one arm around Priscilla, holding her desperately against the deadly pull of the current. With his free hand he was clutching at one of the largest of the gnarled tree roots that protruded down through the earth of the ceiling. The professor, who had been swept halfway to the tunnel mouth in the first rush of the water, reached up at Rick's call and caught a root. There the three clung, dangling and swaying in the rapid current

like three streamers of paper suspended before the gale of an electric fan.

The flood reached up to within a foot of the roof in its first wild rush. Then gradually it lowered its level till the three could drop from the holds of the roots into only a foot or so of water. Finally the crypt was emptied, as was the system of mains behind it. The roaring in the big drain that led to the outside world, diminished to a sullen muttering, and then was stilled altogether. Once more the water splashed in a decorous small brook through the groove cut for it in the floor of the vault.

The crypt was ready for the occupation of the monster who had so painstakingly hollowed it out for a secret retreat from a more normal world.

XIV

"WE'LL LIE ON THE FLOOR," said the professor, "as though Quoy's plan had succeeded. Simulate death."

The three stretched themselves out in sprawled, limp attitudes on the moist floor, to wait the arrival of the evil genius that had imprisoned them there. And as they lay there, with eyes closed and the greenish glow shining on faces pinched and pallid with the chill of the place, they looked indeed like the lifeless corpses it was so imperative that they resemble.

The ordeal of lying helplessly on the floor, waiting for the coming of the dread Quoy, was almost unbearable.

Rick felt that each succeeding second of time must see the end of his endurance—that any instant he must spring to his feet and yell like a maniac to end the suspense. Lying there, just lying there, painfully repressing the shudders of terror and exhaustion and pure chill, with the entire weight of the weedy old cemetery above seeming to press down on him, and with Doctor Quoy somewhere near and creeping closer every moment, was torture far more refined than that of red-hot pincers and rack. And then a positive note crept into the unendurable passivity of their suspense, as, from the mouth of the passageway, came a faint, horrible stench.

For some seconds before Rick could hear anything, his nostrils caught that odor of death, ever growing stronger and more

loathsome. Then from down the dripping passage came a faint, dragging sound.

Rick reached out and pressed the arm of Priscilla, who lay like a limp flower beside him. Then he let his arm fall in a lax, dead way to the floor while he watched, through the fringe of his eyelashes, the entrance of the passage.

The dragging sound grew louder. It puzzled Rick. It sounded as though some sick or wounded thing were dragging itself painfully down the small tunnel. Then Quoy appeared; and at the look and actions of him. Rick could hardly repress a start.

Doctor Quoy was moving slowly, but in a way that showed he was hastening as rapidly as he could. He moved as though partially paralyzed, hitching arms and legs along as if they weighed him down like lead.On his pale, evil face was a dull, perplexed look; and his eyes had a glazed expression.

With a wild thrill of hope, Rick devined the meaning of Quoy's lethargic movements and his anxious, though tortuous, haste. His one point of vulnerability—the inevitable limitation of the vampire—was clamping down on him. Doctor Quoy had almost been overtaken by dawn, and the near-death of his day, before returning to his underground haunt!

Breathlessly, Rick watched the movements of the crippled enemy. And as he watched, the thrill of hope grew wilder.

Doctor Quoy sighed heavily as he dragged himself to his feet. With an immense effort he stood almost upright. Then, scarcely glancing at the three sprawled bodies on the drenched floor, he stumbled toward the spot where the subsiding flood had stranded the wooden coffin.

What occurred then was simple in itself, but ghastly beyond description in the foul and hideous things it connoted.

Doctor Quoy lifted the coffin lid, sighed heavily again, and lay down in the coffin as if it had been a bed. Slowly the lid sank over him, till with a soft thud it had closed him in.

Quoy the malignant, Quoy the fiendishly powerful, was in his deathly trance and delivered into their hands!

With a cry of triumph that rang shrill and cracked in the vault, Rick sprang to his feet and jumped toward the horrible couch of

the vampire. The professor reached it with him, and together they pried at the coffin lid.

It was immovable under their fingers!

Rick glanced at Tholl.

A second time they put their backs into the task of lifting the coffin lid. It didn't stir.

They had seen for themselves how it had settled loosely down into place. They had seen before that there was no inside fastenings to hold it down. Formed of a solid inch-and-a-half plank, it couldn't have weighed more than twenty pounds. Yet it resisted their combined efforts to lift it as though it had been of solid lead and sealed to the box beneath it with steel clamps!

"Beaten . . .again . . ." said the professor brokenly. He seemed to grow older in that bitter short moment. "Again! And I was so sure. . . ."

"We'll break the damned thing in!" snapped Rick.

He picked up a metal rod and brought it crashing down on the wood. A slight dent appeared in the lid. That was all.

He raised the rod for another blow. But at this instant something happened that ended completely the faint hope that Quoy could be reached in that oddly impregnable casket of his.

Priscilla leaped away from them, staring with horrified eyes at the mouth of the smaller drain, while scream after scream burst from her bloodless lips.

The two men spun around to look, then shrank back in their turn.

Whether driven out of the rain-soaked earth by the surplus of fallen water, or called in regimental formation by some ghastly, horrible power, a wriggling mass of life filled the smaller tunnel. A writhing mass of earthworms! The drain was choked with them!

Blind, helpless, slow-moving things, they flowed sluggishly into the crypt in a billowing flood. In a moment they had surrounded the coffin and were rolling and crawling about the feet of the girl and the two men.

"Good Heavens!" Rick gasped. "Look at the things pour out!"

The same vision assailed the brain of each. A second flood,

more horrible by far than any tide of water, slowly rising to trap and submerge them in the crypt. . . .

Silently, with their eyes almost starting from their heads, the three plunged into the lower tunnel entrance and began clawing a way toward the outer world. And as they slipped and fought their way along the dripping passage, it seemed to them that the soft helpless things dropped down upon them from the rotting archway above, and started up between the very bricks under their recoiling fingers. . . .

XV

DOWNSTAIRS, IN THE professor's library, the two men sat gazing unseeingly at the wall, each lost in his thoughts.

They had brought Priscilla here at the professor's house, feeling she would be safer here than anywhere else. She was lying upstairs now, sunk in the sleep of utter exhaustion and nervous shock, with a nurse in attendance. Tholl had phoned the hospital immediately on their arrival in the early morning to stop any police investigations they might have started. Then he had got the nurse for her, and he and Rick had fallen loglike into bed to get some rest.

With the first relief of their great fatigue, they had waked again, too tense for normal slumber. That had been at two in the afternoon. It was now nine in the evening with full night blanketing the city. In those seven endless hours they had stood guard over Priscilla, and had tried to compose themselves to face whatever might next be their lot to endure from the infamous Quoy.

At the moment they were in the library for a few minutes of relaxation and talk; they couldn't converse in Priscilla's room for fear of waking her. The nurse—a grim-faced woman who was almost too efficient at her duties—could see that the girl was undisturbed for a little while.

"Quoy will strike tonight," the professor insisted. "When dawn comes tomorrow, either he will be destroyed, or all three of us will be dead. Tonight decides all."

"How do you know?" demanded Rick, puffing nervously at a cigarette. "I don't see how you can be so certain."

"It can't be otherwise," interrupted Tholl impatiently. "Consider: we three of all the world know Doctor Quoy's true character and identity. And now—we three of all the world know where he hides in daylight, his last secret den. Don't you see—he's *got* to strike, and at once, if he would continue to exist himself."

"What do you think will be Quoy's method of attack tonight? Have you any idea?"

"Yes, I have a pretty definite idea, versed as I am along similar lines. I think he will try to get something from this house. Some intimate, personal thing belonging to one of the three of us. Using that as a focal point, he can destroy us from a distance. We might, perhaps, be able to trap him if he tries to steal into this house for some such thing."

Rick got abruptly to his feet. "I think we'd better get back to Priscilla's room," he said with a shiver.

The two left the library and walked up the stairs. At the head of them they met the nurse, just leaving the girl's room.

"Is she still sleeping?" asked Rick in a low tone.

At this question, the nurse seemed oddly surprised. "Why, yes, sir," she said. "She's as sound asleep as she was a moment ago when you were in her room."

"I? A moment ago?" repeated Rick in amazement. "It's been a half hour since I was in there!"

"I don't understand. . . ." faltered the nurse looking at him as though she doubted his sanity.

But here the professor spoke, clutching Rick's arm convulsively.

"You saw Mr. Ballard come into this room only a moment ago?" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir. It was less than three minutes—"

"What did he do in there?" demanded Tholl.

"He tiptoed to Miss Rand's side, and snipped off a lock of her hair. I thought it was such a sweet little touch of sentiment."

In utter dismay, Rick and Tholl faced each other.

"He's come—and gone!" said Tholl. "And he has accomplished

his purpose while I sat stupidly inactive within forty feet of him! May heaven protect us now!"

Heavily, he instructed the astonished nurse to go to her own home for the night; and, still gazing doubtfully at Rick as though convinced he was not quite sane, she donned her mannish blue coat and left.

"There's nothing more she can do here," said the professor dully to Rick. "Why endanger her life needlessly?"

"You think some general catastrophe may come now—something that would destroy the house and everybody in it?"

Professor Tholl shrugged. "Who can tell? With that fatal lock of hair in his possession, Doctor Quoy can do many things. Which he will attempt, I have no way of divining."

Slowly the minutes passed while the two men sat in Priscilla's room and waited. Rigid they sat, as condemned men sit in their hopeless cells, keyed up to the breaking point; while the girl breathed deeply and regularly, still locked in heavy sleep.

The room was dimly lit by a single light bulb. Rick had moved to snap on the overhead lights, but the professor had stopped him with a gesture.

"Why wake her, with a glare of light, to go through these last few moments of suspense?" he had whispered. "Let her sleep as long as she can, poor girl."

So they sat and watched her, listening to her deep, regular breathing.

Rick's quick ears were the first to catch a slight difference in that rhythmic breathing; his eyes were the first to see the alarming change that came over her face, and to discover the dreadful reason for it.

Priscilla's lips parted, and she moved a little in her sleep; her breathing had changed tempo! It became quicker, uneven, with a harsh, stertorous sound. And her face, pale and worn, was suddenly suffused with crimson. After that the delicate skin became oddly mottled. And her throat—

"Professor!" cried Rick, leaping from his chair and plucking frenziedly at something on Priscilla's white throat. "Look!"

Around the girl's neck, biting more deeply every second into her soft flesh, was a single strand of her long golden hair. It was loose, not in any way connected with the tresses that swept her pillow—one of that lock which Quoy had cut when he entered the room in the appearance of Rick Ballard!

"Help!" Rick implored the professor. "She'll choke to death!"

But the professor was already beside him, tearing at that single throttling strand of hair with fingers that shook as badly as Rick's did.

Under their hands, Priscilla did not move. She had passed from sleep to unconsciousness with scarcely a quiver.

With an immense effort—it was like trying to snap tempered steel piano-wire—they broke the fatal golden thread. But instantly, another appeared, to bite even deeper into the soft white flesh.

And then Rick gave a strangled shout, and his hands flew to his own throat. There, too, an almost invisible strand of gold had appeared, to sink into flesh and muscle in a deep thin groove!

For perhaps five seconds Professor Tholl struggled to break the golden noose. Then, realizing that such efforts were fatally useless, he turned and ran from the room, down the hall, and up the steep stairs to the laboratory in his attic.

Two steps at a time, he ascended the stairs, driving his old body to haste till the veins stood out like cords on his forehead. Across the floor of the eerie laboratory he leaped, to a shelf where was a small, carefully sealed earthen pot. With this in his hands, he ran back to the bedroom.

Rick and Priscilla were both motionless by now, with their faces dreadfully black and their breaths rattling in their throats. Not stopping to try to unseal the earthen pot, the professor dashed it to the floor. It broke, revealing a thick, gummy substance, like a heavy salve, that was purplish blue. The result of one of the experiments with obscure, alchemic formulae which Tholl had mentioned to Rick but had not attempted to explain to him—or to any living soul.

Quickly he applied some of the purplish salve to the constricted throat of Priscilla and Rick.

The deadly hairs snapped.

Once again Doctor Quoy had been beaten—by a pitifully small margin, it is true, but still beaten—at his own game. But Professor Tholl knew that it was not enough, that such desperate and last moment remedies could not be applied forever. Each blow of Doctor Quoy's—and there would be a relentless and never-ending succession of them—might be the last. They must strike at him first, definitely and decisively, if they could think of a way to do it.

So it was that Tholl left Rick and Priscilla when the girl had drawn the first deep breath of returning consciousness. For he *had* thought of a way in which Quoy might be attacked!

It had come to him while he was in his laboratory; and at once it had presented itself as so logical and possible that he was amazed he hadn't thought of trying it before.

True, it might fail; everything else had failed against Quoy so far. And it meant his, the professor's, almost certain death. . . .

Tholl drew himself erect, and his pace, as he descended the stairs, became almost a martial tread. He was old. His life was nearly done anyway. What if he did sacrifice the few years remaining to him? Faced with a chance, no matter how remote, of destroying at last the dread power for which he was indirectly responsible, he did not hesitate.

His fingers tightened on the most powerful weapon against Quoy that had yet been presented to him—something that had within the hour been in direct contact with the vampire.

Professor Tholl gazed down at the two golden hairs he had taken up when they had fallen from the throats of Rick and Priscilla.

He entered his library and opened a secret drawer. In there was the aspen stake which Doctor Quoy, himself had shaped and sharpened. The vampire, probably never dreaming his plot to trap and kill them in the crypt might fail, had not troubled himself to try to retrieve that stake. Now, by some poetic justice, that fire-hardened point might be plunged into his own chest.

Tholl grasped the stake, and marched unfalteringly to that place he had thought never again to enter—the crude

underground chamber in which was hidden the fleshly mantle that had once housed Quoy's intelligence: that body he, Tholl, had done to death in his laboratory two years ago.

XVI

THOLL'S MIND WAS icily clear as he marched to his almost certain doom. In the cellar, he debated calmly whether or not he would leave the secret door in the concrete-block wall open for Rick to follow him later. He decided he would. It was taking a desperate chance that in so doing he might let loose an unspeakable horror in the house; but they were taking desperate chances, anyway.

Clutching the aspen stake and the two long golden hairs, the professor went down the dark passage to the chamber in which Rick had first seen an actual example of the practise of the black arts. With a last deep breath, he flung open the portal and stepped in.

The electric light was still on, as they had left it in their panic-stricken flight days ago, shining with horrible brilliancy on the corpse huddled in a stark heap at the base of the door it had battered against in its insensate attempt to follow the mortals that had disturbed its rest. At this reminder of that last near-catastrophe, the professor shivered. But his mind was still calm and cold.

In the glaring light of the bulb, he took out a pencil and notebook and wrote a few hurried lines. He tore out the page and thrust it carefully into an inside pocket. Then he returned to the task in hand—a brave man about to perform an act of courage no less great for the fact that no one would ever know the supreme fortitude required for it.

As he had done before, he bent over the stark body in an intensity of mental concentration. After a few minutes of this, he touched the lids of the shrunken right eye with his long, tapering fingers. The lids jerked convulsively; finally opened. The withered eyeball turned in its socket to glare at him.

"I am here," grated the hollow, sepulchral voice. "What do you wish?"

Fine moisture broke out on Tholl's forehead, but he did not falter.

"Spirit of a homeless land," he droned, "fettered to this rotting shell, that is not your own, by the dark will of the one who has wronged you, I wish to set you free at last, and to avenge you by condemning *his* black soul as he condemned your innocent one!"

The dead jaws locked shut with such force that the loose teeth splintered together. The shrunken features worked in a frenzy of rage. The glare in the opened right eye was such that Tholl could hardly endure it.

"What am I to do?" boomed the hollow, dull voice. "Command me."

The professor unclenched his left hand, disclosing the two golden hairs. These he laid over the heart of the corpse in a cross-shape.

"These golden strands," he said "have but an hour ago been charged with evil by the one we both wish to annihilate. They are thus two-edged swords, deadly to him as to us. Take them, and, armed with the power their recent hellish contact and association gives you—*force that black intelligence back to this frame in which it was born!*"

The hollow voice did not reply. The stiff eyelids jerked shut over the glaring eye. Anxiously, Professor Tholl watched those two golden hairs, laid over the unbeating heart . . .

Suddenly, they were gone.

The end was swift in coming. Miles away, in a secret crypt twenty feet under the debris of death men call Tynsdale Hollow Cemetery, the sinister figure of Doctor Quoy was bent intently over a lock of long golden hair.

At one moment he was muttering strange words, repeating them from a rune inscribed in faded symbols on an ancient piece of parchment. At the next moment he had fallen, with a wild shriek, to the clammy earthen floor.

The body of Quoy jerked and twitched for a long time in queer and awful spasms . . .then was stark and still.

And shortly after that, the corpse beside Professor Tholl

suddenly moved, as though galvanized with an electric current, and sat up.

Tholl backed away from it, the aspen stake raised before him. The corpse got creakily, unsteadily to its feet. And now *both* eyes were open; and from them came a ray light so luridly evil that the impact of their glance was almost a physical thing. No further demonstration was necessary to proclaim that the eerie transfer had been made—that the savage intelligence of Doctor Quoy was once more in the body in which it had started its mortal journey.

"Thus far you have won," grated the dull, hollow voice, a voice now subtly, terribly different from that which had first sounded in the shrunken chest. "But if you try what I read in your mind, it will be the last act of your life, Professor Tholl!"

"Nevertheless," said Tholl, and his voice, though shaken, was indomitable, "I shall try—and I will succeed. I will impale your rotten heart with this stake!"

"Fool!" boomed the voice. "Should you do that you would die as I died. When that point enters my heart in that same instant a psychic point less solid, but no less deadly, shall pierce your own heart. That at least I can accomplish, even in the moment of my own death. And no one knows it more surely than you!"

In answer, swift and sure, the professor drove for the swaying corpse, even as the bony fingers clamped around his throat.

"No longer am I unable to touch your flesh with mine," rasped the dead voice. "Now will I have the pleasure of killing you with these two hands."

The words ended in a bubbling groan; a groan that rose and swelled terribly to a piercing shriek, and then was stilled.

Tholl had not attempted to tear the throttling, almost fleshless fingers loose. Shaken in the clutch of the gaunt arms, he had yet contrived to arch his body away from the shrunken thing that held him. Then he had placed the fire-hardened point of the aspen stake over the left side of the rotting chest, braced the butt of it against his own breast, and clasped the hideous form to him in an embrace of death.

In and in the stake had gone, till the charred sharp point had thrust with a dreadful soft sound out through the shredding back. And then the creature fell, with the hellish soul of it snuffed out forever.

But with it fell the professor. Quoy had made good his threat, as Tholl had known he would. With the entrance of that point into the long-stilled heart a terrible pain had clamped the professor's own heart. It had pounded once, then stopped. Still locked in the terrible embrace, the two bodies lay motionless on the floor.

It was so, some hours afterward, with the clean gold of sunrise flooding the world, that Rick found them. And it was there in that underground room that he found and read the last few words Professor Tholl had written and thrust into his inside pocket.

"To Priscilla Rand and Rick Ballard, with a last assurance of peace, I leave all my earthly possessions, I make this last will and testament under the premonition that my life will soon be spent, taken from me by my old enemy, heart failure."

"Heart failure!" repeated Rick to Priscilla, as the two stood looking down at the still figure Rick had brought upstairs and arranged gently on the bed. "Heart failure!" He said it for her sake, knowing in his own heart that Tholl had died in destroying their enemy, though he knew not how the professor had accomplished it.

The sublime irony of it! The cold courage and intelligence that even in that last awful moment could think of attributing approaching death to a natural cause and so spare a world ever hostile to beliefs and creeds beyond its limited comprehension, the bitter truth!

" 'With a last assurance of peace,' " murmured Priscilla. "He conquered, then, and that dreadful Thing no longer exists."

"Yes, he conquered," breathed Rick. "Just the look on his face would be enough to tell us that."

And, a little awed, they gazed at the expression of supreme triumph and content that had erased the lines of agony in the last instant before Professor Tholl had fallen.

It Is Written

Paul Spencer writes from 655 Lotus Avenue, Oradell, New Jersey 07649: "I'm especially pleased to see the Cornwall stories in print. Years ago I obtained from Dr. Keller a copy of the manuscript of the complete version, and the series appears to me to show one very attractive aspect of his work at its best. (May I pick a nit? My copy of the mss. has 'Argument *With* Dates'; you have 'Argument *From* Dates', which makes less sense.) . . .

"Charles Hidley is correct in surmising that Keller was influenced by James Branch Cabell, in the Cornwall series and elsewhere. In my 19 years correspondence with Dr. Keller, he often made it plain that he held Cabell in high regard. I suspect it was from Cabell that he got the idea of connecting his stories genealogically, as in the Cornwall series and in other Kelleryarns featuring members of the Hubler (Hubelaire) family and its offshoots—but the Cabell touch shows up in many ways in a number of his tales, most obviously perhaps in the novel, *The Eternal Conflict.*

"Incidentally, any readers of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* who would like information about The James Branch Cabell Society are invited to write to me for a sample copy of our quarterly journal, *KALKI.*"

The nit is well picked, and the error is being corrected with this issue!

Those of you who have seen and are following the Cabell series in the new Ballantine reprints won't regret accepting Mr. Spencer's invitation tc sample a copy of *KALKI*, if you think you might be interested in scholarly, but ever fascinating writings about Cabell's writings by persons well known in the world of fantasy and science fiction, professional, fan, and both. His address is as given at the head of his letter.

Vernon Hodges writes from California: "Your editorial on racism will undoubtedly stimulate a lively response, and deservedly so, not because it concerns racism alone (surely the most overworked subject of the times) but because it courageously juxtaposes the subjects of racism and censorship. While I agree in general with the position at which you arrive, I must take issue with some of your specific arguments. I can remember listening a few years ago to Kenneth Rexroth, the San Francisco poet, as he came out in favor of suppressing Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* because of its anti-Jewish material. If I understood you correctly, *your* position would be to try to edit Shylock before censoring the play—am I right? Now while there is much to be said from a humanitarian viewpoint for this idea, personally I will continue to prefer my Shylock un-denatured, for reasons of cultural history if no other. I agree that censorship is sometimes justified; but I suggest that your response to racism is perhaps a trifle over-sensitive. I should imagine that your readership possesses a fairly high degree of literacy and sophistication, and I doubt very much if any of your readers

are going to be corrupted or offended by the rather naive racial slurs to be found in some of these old stories. My suggestion is that you edit only where you have to (grammar, spelling, misprints, inconsistencies), and leave the story content alone.

"I must confess that I was shocked by your admission that you would suppress an otherwise good story solely because its plot depended on a racial idea. Such a practice, if universally applied, would consign, for instance, fully two-thirds of Sax Rohmer's delightful tales to literary limbo. Say it isn't so: tell us you were kidding.

"I also wonder if perhaps our current negative reaction to literary stereotypes isn't in itself a kind of stereotype. Haven't we, in short, fallen into a liberal cliche; I would suggest that stereotypes, racial or otherwise, are merely generalizations; and that the ability to form generalizations is a necessary function of the human intelligence. I would further suggest (and with some trepidation in these days of madness and fanaticism) that if there had not been at least a modicum of truth to these racial generalizations, they would never have come into being in the first place. The danger, of course, lies in never seeing beyong these generalizations to the individual; for the ability to define individualities is another vital function of the human intelligence.

"Best of luck to your magazine in its battle with the distributors. And keep up the thought-provoking editorials."

The intent of the compliment is appreciated, but courage doesn't enter in to something where one is not afraid in the first place. Of course, anything I write at all might result in grief for me, but I'm still only eligible to be dubbed courageous if I write something which *I believe, at the time,* is very likely to get me into trouble—whether my belief is correct or not.

On censorship: complete suppression and restricted circulation, as I pointed out, are not quite the same thing; and about the only thing I would try to suppress completely, were I in a position to do so, would be certain types of libel about myself, or persons with whom I'm involved—if it were not apparent that the act of attempted suppression would be more damaging than the libel itself. (It was the attempt to suppress parts of *The Death of a President* which proved to be more damaging to Mrs. John F. Kennedy than the material itself would have been otherwise.)

The position I took was, of course, a general one—not a dogma, not a doctrine to be applied mechanically—and any actual case would have to be decided on its own merits. I'll only say that I see no reason even for so much as restricting circulation of *The Merchant of Venice* or the Fu Manchu series, etc.

It has always seemed to me that the line, "You shouldn't do such-and-such because what if everybody did it ..." rests on a rather pernicious fallacy. Outside of necessary bodily functions, there's what I'd call a probability zero of *everybody's* doing anything at all in particular.

Nonetheless, I accept what you obviously meant. And perhaps misunderstanding might have been avoided had I told a bit more about *The Last Horror.* It is, in total effect, an anti-racist story; what revolted me back in 1939, and still does (although it seems more funny than nauseating now), is the mid-Victorian melodramatic writing and depiction, with an oh-so-eloquent sermon at the end which touches the heart of the antagonist so that he stays his hand at the very last moment. So it seems to me that I can be charged with suppressing the story only to the extent that I can be charged with suppressing

any story which I reject on the grounds that it is not, to my judgment, good enough to print or reprint.

I cannot entirely go along with the suggestion that "...if there had not been at least a modicum of truth to these racial generalizations, they would never have come into being in the first place." Not that there may not be, or at least may not have been, a modicum of truth in *some* racial generalizations – but some of the most virulent were sheer fantasies (sick fantasies in some instances, dreamed up by persons who believed their own imaginings) and some outright lies (the perpetrators knew durned well they were not true at the time they set them afloat), like the reports that spread in England at the time of the Cromwell invasions of Ireland that the Irish had tails. (Of course, if these were really dangerous animals, rather than human beings, there was nothing morally wrong about exterminating them so that the true human British could have the land for their noble Christian selves, etc.)

One final question, Friend Hodges. Imagine that you are the editor, and in reading over oldtime stories in magazines of yesteryear you come across one which strikes you as being excellent and powerful. However, in the story you find the following sentence:

"Like all Germans, von Fluchtenheit was boastful, arrogant, and brutal when he had overwhelming force behind him; now that his position was precarious, the innate cowardice of his bullying race showed through."

This is not an actual quotation, but is very close to the sort of thing one often does come across in pulp stories published in the twenties and thirties. My question: Would you reprint that sentence exactly as is?

I agree that reactions to stereotypes can themselves become stereotyped, since so many people would rather accept a new synonym for "good" or "bad", and apply it mechanically, than undergo the pains of thought necessary to determine whether it really applied in the particular instance. To a certain extent, we all apply stereotyped responses in some areas (which ones depends upon the individual), and often the reactions are entirely appropriate, like the single whiff of an egg which is sufficient.

Muriel C. Eddy, commenting upon the account of H. P. Lovecraft's losing the typescript of *Imprisoned with the Pharaohs,* and having to re-type it on his wedding night, in 1924, states that it was the bride who did the re-typing, noting that the one-time Mrs. Sonia Lovecraft "...wrote this herself in an article about HPL published in the *PROVIDENCE SUNDAY JOURNAL* several years ago." She relates something about Clifton B. Eddy's relationship with Houdini:

"Shortly following his (Lovecraft's) return to Providence, my husband received a note from Harry Houdini asking him to meet him backstage at the Keith-Albee Theatre, where he would be appearing. HPL had suggested Cliff's name to do some writing for Houdini, and visited us to give my husband a note of introduction to him.

"I remember my husband's painstaking revision of Houdini's *Thoughts and Feelings of a Head Cut Off,* an experience which the Master magician had undergone in his youth. Harry Houdini said in his story that somewhere in his travels he came across an ancient superstition that if a head was severed quickly and unexpectedly from a body, the brain kept on thinking for several seconds.

"My husband also was requested by Houdini to write a history of superstitions. None of the three men (H.P. Lovecraft, Clifton B. Eddy, Harry Houdini) believed in superstition, but they often used superstitions with which

to weave a story. My husband spent many hours doing research. Houdini's death came so unexpectedly that the article was unfinished, so that Mrs. Beatrice Houdini told my husband to use it in whatever way he so desired. Years later he was able to take time to complete it, and place it for publication.

"Beatrice Houdini assisted her husband with his magic acts. I remember particularly when Harry Houdini finished his escape from a sealed metal casket on the stage of the old Providence Opera House, his wife passed out souvenir charms to the audience. She was quite gracious. Her pet parrot, Lory, accompanied her on her shoulder. After the performance, at the midnight hour, Mr. and Mrs. Houdini, Mr. Lovecraft, and my husband and I sat around a table at a downtown restaurant.

"I suppose it's vivid in my memory because it was the last time we were all together. Mrs. Houdini fed Lory tea, with cream and sugar, from a spoon, and little pieces of toast. HPL ordered half a cantelope filled with vanilla ice cream, and a cup of coffee. He was in great spirits and extremely talkative for a usually quite man.

"My husband continued to work for Houdini, in the magician's quest to expose fake mediums who were preying on the public. These were indeed interesting, exciting days, although it meant that my husband was away from home a great deal, traveling and writing. Unfortunately it all ended far too soon. Harry Houdini (really Erich Weiss) died on October 31, 1926. HPL considered that a weird touch, too—that a man who didn't believe in superstition should meet his death on the night that witches and goblins are supposed to prowl!"

Richard Lupoff, thanking me for the review and comment upon his book, *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure*, goes on to say: "As an editor and sometime author yourself, you surely know that making a living from one's writing is only half the reward. The other half is the response, the knowledge that one's works are actually read, actually have some impact on people and stimulate in them some sort of reaction. So, again, my thanks.

"Not to quibble lengthily over a minor point, but in your review you say: 'I'm not at all convinced that A. Hyatt Verrill needed to have read the Pellucidar stories . . . or that Stanton A. Coblentz needed to have read them. . . .' You're entirely in the right, and if I implied the opposite, I was wrong to do so. The point I meant to make was merely that the works I was citing followed Burroughs in the hollow Earth-inhabited caverns tradition. Which ERB, of course, did not invent either. He was himself (with his Pellucidar stories) writing in a tradition that goes back to Lloyd, Bradshaw, Verne, Symmes, and Holberg; Verrill and Coblentz 'followed' Burroughs in this tradition but did not necessarily draw inspiration from him: they may very well have drawn on the same (earlier) sources that Burroughs himself drew from.

". . . I don't normally consider myself much of a horror fan, and don't usually read *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*, but since this copy was to hand, I started through the stories and found myself absolutely captivated by them! I'm not sure why. Maybe it's their innocence: the thought that people could consider a mere 'elemental spirit' as horrifying in this age of hydrogen bombs and biological warfare reflects a refreshing *naivete*. . . .

"O—*The Thirty and One*. Really superior writing, this is the kind of story that made Dr. Keller the favorite that he was during his lifetime. And it holds up beautifully. I. *Portraits by Jacob Pitt*. Nice old-style horror story. Another quibble though: How could one tell a

painting of sunrise at sea from a painting of sunset at sea? Without walking outside to look at sunrise and sunset tomorrow I have a feeling that they'd look quite alike!

"1. (tied): *Guatemozin the Visitant:* I thought Burks handled the fantasy sequences in ancient Anahuac better than the portions in modern Mexico, which seemed rather labored and graceless. However, I've been spoiled for all other Aztec stories by Haggard's fine novel, *Montezuma's Daughter.* 3. *The Case of the Sinister Shape:* This is so clumsy, so crudely done. Dr. Muncing must be the veriest dub in the psychic detective derby—when one considers John Silence, Carnacki, Solange, even Morris Klaw—but MacCreagh manages nonetheless to invest his story with such innocence and vigor that reading it is as much fun as watching a puppy tumble. In fact, I was tempted to rate it even higher than this, but calmer judgment prevailed at last. 4. *The Red Sail:* Very minor treatment of a theme handled far better by a good many other writers, Last place.

"I certainly *did* like the cover, and while I wouldn't positively object to seeing the work of other artists, you'll never hear me complain about too much Finlay. As far as I'm concerned, that would be a contradiction in terms."

And an editor is much like a writer in that he also obtains gratification above and beyond salary, and in some ways more important, from hearing readers' opinions on issues of his magazines. ... The McCreagh story was written, of course, well before the full onset of this age of hydrogen bombs and biological warfare, but I can think of one reason why such stories can still have an appeal today. Suspend disbelief for the sake of the story, and the elemental as described in *The Case of the Sinister Shape* (and the earlier tale to which this is a sequel) becomes quite a formidable menace. But *one* man with knowledge can deal with it, while the combined efforts of innumerable seemingly wise men have yet to lay the spirit of war, which has brought forth the lurking horrors of the day around us.

I think each reader will have to decide for himself whether you actually implied that Verrill and Coblentz were inspired by the Pellucidar stories. I raised the issue because it seemed to me that such an inference was at least possible. But what I or others may infer does not necessarily prove that you really implied it. Should you have the opportunity for yet further revision of the book, it might not hurt to be as explicit as you are in your comment above, and that was the reason why I brought up the point. There's no such thing as blocking off wrongheaded inferences completely, but it is possible to make them more difficult.

The point on the difference between sunrise and sunset at sea is well taken, and I'll admit that it never occurred to me. ... Since you tied two stories for first place, it was necessary to score the next highest story as second, rather then third, and the one after that third, rather than fourth. ... Yes, it was the Anahuac sequences in the Burks story which I found most effective, too. And of course the old reincarnation theme has been done by others better—but in the short-short length? However, with a few exceptions, the readers seem to agree with you; no positive dislike votes have come in thus far, but numbers of those who put it in last place took the trouble to say they did not think it awfully good.

Craig S. Fowler writes from Texas: "Issue No. 29 of MOH was, as is usual, an outstanding one. I thought two stories were particularly impressive, those two being Keller's *The Thirty and*

One and MacCreagh's *The Case of the Sinister Shape.* Of the two, the Keller tale holds the greatest appeal, however. I know of no other author who could even begin to match the delightful fantasies of Dr. Keller. The versatility of Dr. Keller is perhaps his most outstanding characteristic. In science fiction he gave us *The Revolt of the Pedestrians,* a real classic. This same man gave us also the superb psychological horror stories, *The Dead Woman* and the famous *A Piece of Linoleum.* It seems incredible to me that his fantasies could be as well written as his other work but the *Tales From Cornwall* amply demonstrate his great talent in the genre. I am eagerly looking forward to the next installments of the series. I hope that you will continue to reprint his stories even when the *Tales* are ended. Perhaps you will be able to publish some of his hitherto unpublished works.

"For some reason, the character of Dr. Muncing has captured my imagination. The stories do have a real originality in concept that interests me. The idea of an elemental from another plane feeding, vampirically, off the life forces of its victims is a frightening one. I liked the way the elemental absorbed the abilities of the victim. The idea of mental as well as physical vampirism is an interesting one. If I remember an earlier reference to the series, there was another story, sold to *WEIRD TALES* but never printed, called *The Crusader's Hand,* or something like that. I, for one, would like to see the story printed, if it is at all possible."

The elemental comes from Eastern metaphysical and occult lore, and while the MacCreagh stories are, it is true, much more "pulpy" than psychic detective stories by Blackwood, Hodgson, etc., they do have impact partly because the author apparently did some homework rather than making up his magic as he went along.

In the final issue of *STRANGE TALES*, January 1933, the forecast page listed a third Dr. Muncing story, *The Case of the Crusader's Hand.* Also listed were *The Seed from the Sepulchre,* by Clark Ashton Smith (which later appeared in the October 1933 *WEIRD TALES*) and *The Valley of the Lost,* by Robert E. Howard (which we ran in the fourth issue of *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*, Spring 1967, under the title, *The Secret of Lost Valley.* The title had to be changed because a story entitled *The Valley of the Lost,* by Robert E. Howard, appeared in the thirteenth issue of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*', Summer 1966, under our mistaken belief that this was the story that had been announced for *STRANGE TALES.*) The MacCreagh story never showed up, as such; but the January 1951 issue of *WEIRD TALES* featured a novelet entitled *The Hand of St. Ury;* and upon reading it I was satisfied that this was a re-write of the Dr. Muncing story, as a "crusader's hand" does indeed play a part in it.

What I suspect is that MacCreagh sent the story to WT, after *STRANGE TALES* folded up, and that Farnsworth Wright either did not want the story at all, or did not want to continue Dr. Muncing, for one reason or another. (Perhaps he felt WT had sufficient series characters.) So, to continue my educated guess, MacCreagh rewrote the story, taking Dr. Muncing out of it; whereupon it still was not found right for Wright, or the story never got re-submitted to WT while Wright was still there. It was a later editor, of course, who accepted the tale.

Several readers have written in to inquire about a missing line on page 30 of the July 1969 *MAGAZINE OF HORROR,* in the story, *Raymond The Golden,* by David H. Keller, M.D. The missing line opens a paragraph and reads:

"The next morning, while she was still asleep, he left her on the bed of" So you see, it wasn't censorship, but just a matter of a line of type falling off the corrected proofs. Needless to say, the editor is no more consolable than you, the readers, about this; in fact, far less so.

Noel R. Perkins writes from Syracuse, Kansas, "I have just received the September issue of MOH and have not had time to read the stories as yet, but I have just finished reading your editorial concerning racism, stereotypes, consorship, and Edgar Rice Burroughs, and I was deeply impressed by it and wish to register my agreement with, and appreciation of, the opinions set forth therein. It was a pleasure to read such a clear, fair-minded, and superbly reasoned essay on the subject, and I cannot help but feel that this journalistic endeavor of yours richly deserves preservation in more permanent form. I hope that you will continue to so courteously and thoroughly expose, with these delightfully satisfying essays, the erroneous reasoning of contemporary society, and that your efforts will some day be gathered between hard covers."

Thank you, Friend Perkins. I hope that my publication of your letter will suffice to show that accusations of modesty against me are unjust. RAWL



The Editor's Page

(continued from page 7)

that I *like* any character in the novel; but Spinrad has presented Jack Barron and his ex-wife, Sara, so vividly that I feel I know them and understand them, sympathize with their plight, and care at least somewhat about what happens to them.

They are the products of a horrible society, but not (as with so much contemporary fiction) whining, self-pitying, helpless puppets of it. They do not realize that the dreams they shared and fought for in the early days were nightmares that have come true to a very large extent—that the only possible end of mindless rebellion against all standards in a highly technological society can only end (if it succeeds) in a mindless society without standards, where not just a percentage, but everyone is alienated, frustrated, visionless. And the few extraordinary persons are very likely to be fighting for more of the same measures which produced the present ghastly conditions in the first place.

Long before I ever heard of semantics, I found that fundamental attitudes can be absorbed from the language one first learns. In 1931-33, studying Spanish in high school, from a textbook that probably went back to 1914 or earlier, we were taught that the correct way to say "Don't be cruel." in Spanish is to use an idiom: "Don't be a Jew." So far as the textbook went, that was the only way you could say it. One can hope that things have changed, but it shows that at one time, anti-semetism was built in to the language.

My reaction of horror to Spinrad's picture of a society where education has become little more than instruction in how to be dirty, disobedient, and destructive is, I admit, a subjective one. And in fairness to the author, it must be acknowledged that no explicit evaluation or description of education is presented in the story. However, the tree is known by its fruit: we see a society where nearly all are helpless puppets of slogans, and nostalgia for the past is a nostalgia for days of rebellion and flying banners of protest. The unspeakable present is one where the entire populace is as easily manipulated as were the plebs of Rome in its decline. There is no indication that anyone is taught how to think or to look beyond the immediate stimulus of slogans. The present is frightful and the fear of death (every means through which man has learned to face his mortal end on higher than an animal level having been destroyed when the universities were subverted) has made the entire populace ideal victims of the most absurd (but viscerally most effective!) fraud of the century: deep freezing at the point of death at tremendous expense.

Jack Barron is not the usual "common man" victim-protagonist of the usual dystopian novel of recent years. He is an extraordinary man in relation to the

quality of most of those around him. Nonetheless, his vocabulary is not much larger than that of other successful people, and his comprehension of the meaning of words is not really much greater. He is a part of the great deception game, contemptuous of those who believe the propaganda but nonetheless subject to it himself. He has no faith, as the common suckers have, that if they can only get into the freezers, they'll be unfrozen at some future time and all their illnesses cured, so that they'll virtually start life all over again. Yet when the opportunity for a freeze comes to Barron on terms that he is willing to accept, he cannot sneer at it.

Now we can see a reason for the scatology. To oversimplify, there are two types of person whose speech and thoughts are saturated with Anglo-Saxon four-letter words relating to the bedroom and the bathroom: (1) those whose vocabulary, through lack of education, is so limited that four-letter words are their only means of expressing strong or deep feelings (2) those who are hung up in a compulsive way to rebellion against everything that can be considered as "established." Both are incited by the fact that such words have been considered as forbidden, indecent, vulgar, etc. By the time the story starts, throughout the entire country, the lack of education, the lack of training to think, the overthrow of standards, the ignorance of literature and the use of words outside of their sloganistic sense in advertising and political propaganda, have peaked to the point where the vast majority are in the limited vocabulary class. Moreover, these words have become so universal on just about every level of society (which is now almost stratified between the rich and the welfare dwellers) that they no longer have any shock value. (The author doesn't say, but I infer that it would be the old words relating to the highest of

HAVE YOU MISSED ANY OF OUR BACK ISSUES?

Here is a listing of the contents of those that were still available when this new issue was closed.

5, September 1964: *Cassius*, Henry S. Whitehead; *Love at First Sight*, J. L. Miller; *Five-Year Contract*, J. Vernon Shea; *The House of the Worm*, Merle Prout; *The Beautiful Suit*, H. G. Wells; *A Stranger Came to Reap*, Stephen Dentinger; *The Morning the Birds Forgot to Sing*, Walt Libescher; *Bones*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Ghostly Rental*, Henry James.

6, November 1964: *Caverns of Horor*, Laurence Manning; *Prodigy*, Walt Liebscher; *The Mask*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Life-After-Death of Mr. Thaddeus Ward*, Robert Barbour Johnson; *The Feminine Fraction*, David Grinnell; *Dr. Hedigger's Experiment*, Nathaniel Hawthorne; *The Pacer*, August Derleth; *The Moth*, H. G. Wells; *The Door to Saturn*, Clark Ashton Smith.

#7, January 1965: *The Thing From-Outside*, George Allan England; *Black Thing at Midnight*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Oblong Box*, Edgar Allan Poe; *A Way with Kids*, Ed M. Clinton; *The Devil of the Marsh*, E. B. Marriott-Watson; *The Shattered Room*, H. P. Lovecraft & August Derleth.

#8, April 1965: *The Black Laugh*, William J. Makin; *The Hand of Glory*, R. H. D. Barham; *The Garrison*, David Grinnell; *Passcar*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Lady of the Velvet Collar*, Washington Irving; *Jack*, Reynold Junker; *The Burglar-Proof Vault*, Oliver Taylor; *The Dead Who Walk*, Ray Cummings.

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#9, June 1965: *The Night Wire*, H. F. Arnold; *Sacrilege*, Wallace West; *All the Slain of Long Delight*, Jerome Clark; *Skulls in the Stars*, Robert E. Howard; *The Photographs*, Richard Marsh; *The Distortion out of Space*, Francis Flagg; *Guarantee Period*, William M. Danner; *The Door in the Wall*, H. G. Wells; *The Three Low Masses*, Alphonse Daudet; *The Whistling Room*, William Hope Hodgson.

#10, August 1955: *The Girl at Heddon's*, Pauline Kappel Prilucik; *The Torture of Hope*, Villiers de L'sle-Adam; *The Cloth of Madness*, Seabury Quinn; *The Tree*, Gerald W. Page; *In the Court of the Dragon*, Robert W. Chambers; *Placide's Wife*, Kirk Mashburn; *Come*, Joanna Russ; *The Plague of the Living Dead*, A. Hyatt Verrill.

#11, November 1965: *The Empty Zoo*, Edward D. Hoch; *A Psychological Shipwreck*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Call of the Mech-Men*, Laurence Manning; *Was It a Dream?*, Guy de Maupassant; *Under the Han Tree*, Katherine Yates; *The Head of Du Bois*, Dorothy Norman Cooke; *The Dwellers in Dark Valley* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *The Devil's Pool* Greye la Spina.

#12, Winter 1965/66: *The Faceless God*, Robert Bloch; *Master Nicholas*, Seabury Quinn; *But Not the Herald*, Roger Zelazny; *Dr. Mancing, Exorcist*, Gordon MacCreagh; *The Affair at 7 Rue de M-*, John Steinbeck; *The Man in the Dark*, Irwin Ross; *The Abyss*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *Destination* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *Memories of HPL* (article), Muriel E. Eddy; *The Black Beast*, Henry S. Whitehead;

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human values which have become forbidden and shocking—not by law, but by common reaction. Anyone who uses them is a reactionary and a loathsome person, just as, at an earlier time, the person who used these four-letter words was looked upon as something of a pervert, or at the least a loathsome person.)

To anyone like myself, who treasures the heritage of the past, particularly in literature, philosophy, etc., the effect of the way people in the world of ***Bug Jack Barron*** talk and think (amidst continuing technological progress) is sheer horror. And the bizarre ratiocinations that pass for thinking in this age is almost as gruesome to me as the physical gruesomeness which is revealed as the point of Barron's problem. I do not want to tell too much about the story line, so that if you have not read the book, Spinrad will have a fair chance to put his full impact across. I shall just say here that one of the reasons I cannot accept the story as science fiction is that the crowning gruesomeness strikes me as scientifically absurd. But *not* ineffective; putting disbelief aside and merely contemplating it, as one might do with ***Dracula***, etc., it is tremendously effective. There is no explanation as to how something seemingly impossible is achieved, and if (as I suspect) the author was unaware of the fundamental flaw, this may be all to the good. Awareness might have led him to explain, or try to make it more believable; and I verily feel that this would have weakened, rather than strengthened the story.

We need not be concerned about any claims of great novelty, or new discoveries in the book; there aren't any—and none are needed. Even with Spinrad's claim to have invented the term "shade" for white men, I must disagree in part—back in the mid thirties, I heard it used as a "polite" synonym for

Negro. (I'll grant him Acapulco Gold, however, cheerfully—and not without pleasure; he's earned something at least, beyond so transitory stuff as money, for the genuine hard work that went in to this story.) What he has done is, as I've said elsewhere in relation to literary experimentation of any sort, to make it new; *Bug Jack Barron* emerges as an original, even though you can make up a list of origins from science fiction and mainstream a yard long.

Some have hailed the revelation that anyone can be bought as the high point of the story. I do hope that the author doesn't agree, because it wouldn't be so, even if it were original. Although I do appreciate his modifications that (a) you have to know the subject's price, which isn't by any means money all the time (b) you have to be able to deliver (c) you have to want to buy in the first place. Spinrad makes some amusing plays on the situation wherein a person is willing to sell but no one wants to buy. (I have given the impression thus far that the book is one vast grimace and grimness. Let me now try to modify this impression. Despite the horror, it is very amusing indeed, coming close to comedy of the late Charlie Chaplin or late Mark Twain sort—although there is no slapstick. Nothing in it gave me the Laurel and Hardy type of belly-laugh, but I found a grin on my face frequently while I was reading it—the grin of quiet amusement which can add up to a great deal more than uproars. My subjective opinion about this sort of humor, black as it often may be, is that it is more enduring than the loud laughter sort; it is more repeatable and certainly, for purposes of satire, more effective in the over-all sense.)

But the point the author makes, and which no one else whose writings about the story I've read seems to have noticed, is that every man, no matter how corrupt, depraved, etc., has the

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#13, Summer 1966: *The Thing in the House*, H. F. Scotten; *Divine Madness*, Roger Zelazny; *Valley of the Lost*, Robert E. Howard; *Heredity*, David H. Keller; *Dwelling of the Righteous*, Anna Hunger; *Almost Immortal*, Austin Hall.

#14, Winter 1966/67: *The Lair of the Star-Spawn*, August Derleth & Mark Schorer; *The Vacant Lot*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *Proof*, S. Fowler Wright; *Comes Now the Power*, Roger Zelazny; *The Moth Message*, Laurence Manning; *The Friendly Demon*, Daniel deFoe, *Dark Hollow*, Emil Petaja; *An Inhabitant of Carcosa*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Monster-God of Mamurth*, Edmond Hamilton.

#15, Spring 1967: *The Room of Shadows*, Arthur J. Burks; *Lilies*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Flaw*, J. Vernon Shea; *The Doom of London*, Robert Barr (introduction by Sam Moskowitz); *The Vale of Lost Women*, Robert E. Howard; *The Ghoul Gallery*, Hugh B. Cave.

#16, Summer 1967: *Night and Silence*, Maurice Level; *Lazarus*, Leonid Andreyev; *Mr. Octbur*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Dog that Laughed*, Charles Willard Diffin; *Ah, Sweet Youth*, Pauline Kappel Prilucik; *The Man Who Never Was*, R. A. Lafferty; *The Leaden Ring*, S. Baring-Gould; *The Monster of the Prophecy*, Clark Ashton Smith.

#17, Fall 1967: *A Sense of Crawling*, Robert Edmond Alter; *The Laughing Duke*, Wallace West; *Dermod's Bane*, Robert E. Howard; *The Spell of the Sword*, Frank Aubrey (introduction by Sam Moskowitz); *"Williamson"*, Henry S. Whitehead; *The Curse of Amen-Ra*, Victor Rousseau.

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#24, November 1968: *Once in a Thousand Years*, Francis Bragg Middleton; *The Eye of Horus*, Stellan B. Aletti; *4 Prose Poems: Memory, What the Moon Brings, Nyarlathotep, Ex Oblivione*, H. P. Lovecraft; *A Diagnosis of Death*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Abyss* (part two), David H. Keller, M. D.

#25, January 1969: *There Shall be no Darkness*, James Blish; *The Phantom Ship*, Captain Frederick Marryat; *When Dead Gods Wake*, Victor Rousseau; *The Writings of Elwin Adams*, Larry Eugene Meredith; *The Colossus of Ylourgne*, Clark Ashton Smith.

#26, March 1969: *The Devil's Bride* (part one), Seabury Quinn; *The Oak Tree*, David H. Keller, M. D.; *The Milk Carts*, Violet A. Methley; *Cliffs That Laughed*, R. A. Lafferty; *Flight*, James Bennett & Soong Kwen-Ling; *The White Dog*, Feodor Sologub.

#27, May 1969: *Spawn of Inferno*, Hugh B. Cave; *The Sword and the Eagle*, David H. Keller, M. D.; *The Horror out of Lovecraft*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Last Work of Pietro of Apono*, Steffan B. Aletti; *At the End of Days*, Robert Silverberg; *The Devil's Bride* (part two), Seabury Quinn.

#28, July 1969: *The Nameless Mummy*, Arlton Eadie; *Raymond the Golden*, David H. Keller, M. D.; *The Phantom Drug*, A. W. Kapfer; *The Rope*, Robert Greth; *A Revolt of the Gods*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Devil's Bride* (part three), Seabury Quinn; *Not Only in Death They Die* (verse), Robert E. Howard.

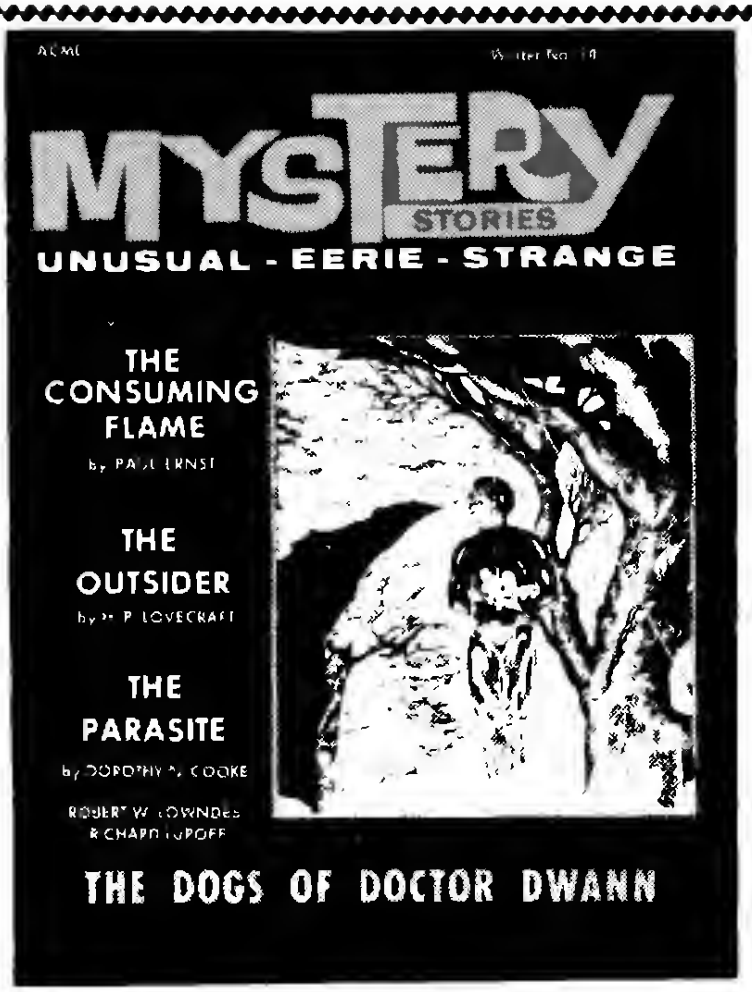
#29, September 1969: *The Case of the Sinister Shape*, Gordon MacCreagh; *The Thirty and One*, David H. Keller, M. D.; *Portraits by Jacob Pitt*, Steven Lott; *The Red Sail*, Charles Hilan Craig; *Guatemozin the Visitant*, Arthur J. Burks.

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point where he says "NO!" He may not have the strength of character to persevere in the end; he may wind up complying and whimpering; but there is that point where his whole inner being, however contracted, has been revolted, where he has the desire to resist to the end. And in the novel, we learn what Barron's point of revolt really is; of his first determination to say "No" and make that stick, whatever the cost; of a price to pay for this that he cannot bear to pay; and of how he did pay it and persevere after all. Jack Barron isn't at all nice, but he isn't the truly detestable sort of anti-hero which, I am told, is the only sort worth writing about these days—according to the ultra-literary critics of academe, that is.

It had originally been my intention to discuss what some have claimed to be particular weaknesses in the book, but I find I cannot do so without telling too much. I'll have to be a little cryptic, then, in contradicting that Sara's final assistance to Jack is both corny and derived of meaning because of her condition at the time. Since she is usually hopped up in one way or another, the fact that she's on a LSD trip at the crucial moment certainly cannot be considered as either for or against her; and we know, from many reports, that LSD's effect on any particular individual cannot be predicted at any particular time—so that we can neither praise nor blame LSD for Sara's effort.

And the fact is that, in their own ways, both Jack and Sara Barron are heroic. They are both indulgent, self-centered people, incapable of seeing much more than the images of each other that they have created and fallen in love with—and yet, we find there is, after all, a touch of real love behind these images. When the time comes, each is ready to sacrifice self for something that seems bigger and more important



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than self. It makes little difference whether you and I, looking from above, agree with the worth of what is being sacrificed for; the point is that, however debased their ideals, Jack and Sara *have* ideals and it is the triumph of these in the end that put them into the ranks of humanity. And of the two, fuzzy-headed Sara does the most.

In a mindless society, wherein most people revolve slogans and words around their skulls in an echo-chamber manner (and one reason why I find this effective here is that I know from experience that people under severe emotional and psychological stress do just that, and this is the constant condition of these people in the book) almost any emotional decision arrived at is going to come out sheer corn. That's all there is for them to work with. They've never been taught to think; they've never had the treasures of our human heritage to dip in to (all this is reactionary); they've had the lowest, most degrading forms of "entertainment" beamed at them from the monster idiot box from childhood. The inevitable result is that, with a few exceptions, their lives will be soap operas.

Jack himself is mostly corn. His great program is a phony, and he knows it—it's just by accident that he gets on to something real. However, he himself has enough contact with his inner convictions (however stupid or blunted) to follow through when something which, at first, looks like nothing more than a game of power between himself and Howards eventually reaches the level of a moral issue. Barron's conceit is such that he's sure Howards can't hurt him; but he doesn't back down at once when he realizes that he really can be hurt—and has been.

One flaw I *can* discuss, and that is the portrayal of Benedict Howards. I cannot think offhand of how Spinrad could

have done it without violating the direct presentation, no lectures, no explanations, format of the story—but whether or not I can do a barbering job, I can tell when someone needs a haircut. To give an analogy: if the only portrayal of Adolf Hitler you had ever come across was the depiction of him in his last days, after the bomb plot (as in Trevor-Roper's *The Last Days of Hitler)*, could you believe that this man outwitted and out-thought and out-bluffed and out-maneuvered his way from the sidewalks to supreme power, regaining all the territory that Germany had lost in the previous war without exchanging a shot? Howards, in *his* last days, is a push-over for Jack Barron and his only hope is to get Barron to be afraid to risk that push. The picture is well done; given what Howards has become, his behavior is consistent and believable. But what we lose is any feeling that the caricature we see here could possibly have reached the exalted state Howards now holds.

I had read very little by Norman Spinrad before picking up *Bug Jack Baron* (one story in *ANALOG;* one story which I would have run in *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* had we continued), and was not much impressed with him as a writer. I was, however, impressed by his story-sense; and he has improved as a writer, without losing the story-sense. By "story sense," I mean the ability to capture and hold the reader through a long story by the process of building up tension; releasing part of it, retaining enough to seep through and build up again to another partial release; until at the end we have the final climax. It sounds easy, eh? I have never known of any writer who found it easy to achieve, although I've known some who thought they had achieved it (and it wasn't so hard) when in fact they had not (which is why it wasn't so hard).

It's rather sad to think that this story is going to date rather soon, but that was unavoidable. In order to transmit the necessary impact, the feeling of reality, we had to have a sort of hippie-type argot for both the words and thoughts of most of the characters. But current argot, of any sort, just doesn't endure ten to twenty years or so; in fact, I've been told that some of the slang in the book is already becoming obsolete. Nonetheless, it will give the feeling that the author wants it to give to those who are not always up with the very latest jive, as it were—and I imagine that this would be a majority. To have invented an argot all his own would have bypassed this particular difficulty, only to result in Spinrad's having lost exactly that feeling of immediacy that he was trying to create.

While it is true that many science fiction tales have indeed made predictions which came to pass, both technological and sociological, it seems to me that the most enduring and valuable thing that science fiction can do is to present an author's feelings about the present in a way that ordinary fiction cannot do. And, after all, the present is the only thing the author has to project feelings about—even if he's dealing with the past, it is still the past colored by his feelings about it right now, as he writes.

As to how this story will endure, I can only make a guess; and my guess is that it may well sink out of sight for a while, once its perishable elements have crumbled away—but if this happens, I think there is a very good chance of its being re-discovered and valued more highly at a future time, as a source book for viewpoints of the late 1960's. In any event, despite all faults, *Bug Jack Barron,* did two things for me: it entertained me, and it stimulated thinking. And I'm convinced it can do as much for anyone else who can take the unpretty aspects of it. RAWL

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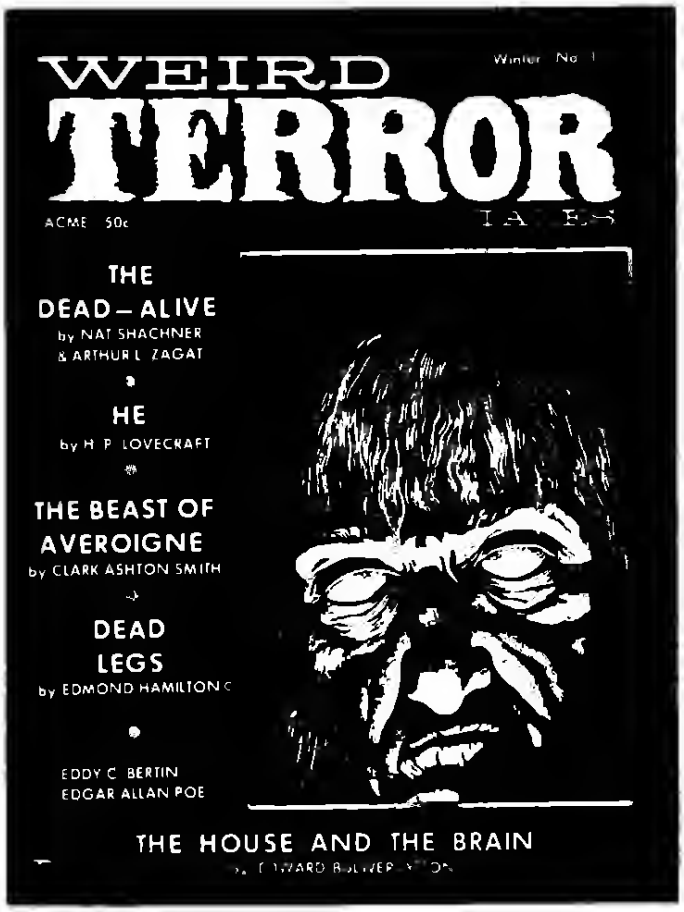
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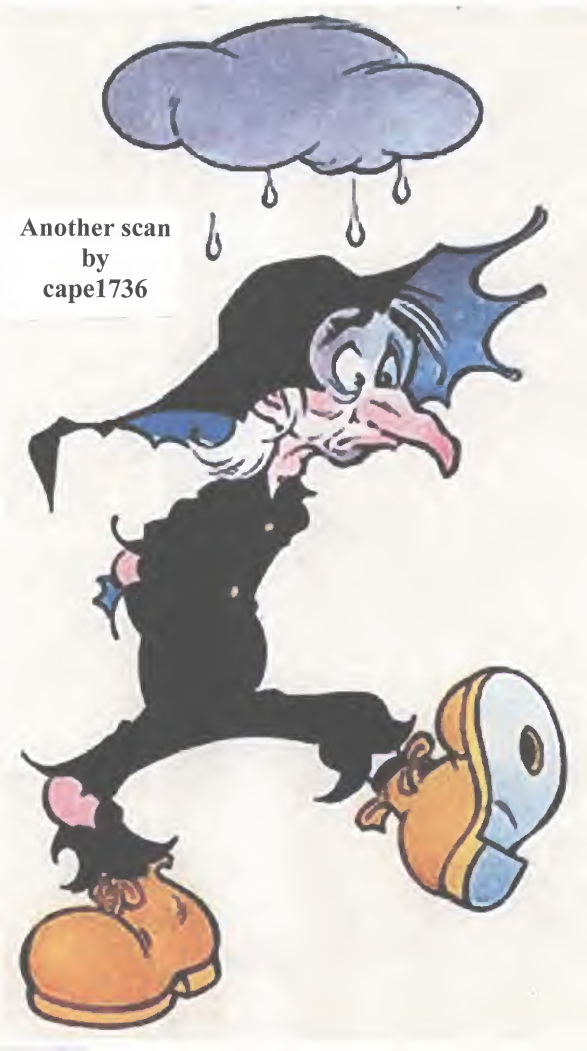
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